

KK
L 8 (Eng.)
946

THE
REMINISCENCES OF A SCOTTISH SCOUT:
1912—1923.

(Revised Edition.)

BY

ALAN C. McKAY.

ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

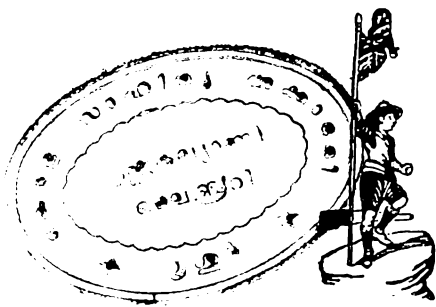
FOR

BRITISH COCHIN.

—:o:—

“.....may your wigwams dwell
In pleasant places,
And your Camp Fires burn for ever.”

—:o:—



KK
 L 8 (Eng.)
 946

THE
 REMINISCENCES OF A SCOTTISH SCOUT:
 1912—1923.

(Revised Edition.)

BY

ALAN C. McKAY.

ASSISTANT DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

FOR

BRITISH COCHIN.

—:O:—

“.....may your wigwams dwell
 In pleasant places,
 And your Camp Fires burn for ever.”

—:O:—

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

REMINISCENCES OF A BOY SCOUT.

CHAPTER-		PAGES.
1.	Early days 1912—1914	1
2.	The Great war 1914—1918	17
3	Our Annual Concerts 1918—1923	33
4.	The International Jamboree. 1920	57
5.	Our Island Camps 85—122	

PREFACE.

In glancing over our Library Catalogue we are apt to eliminate from our 'wanted' list those books that have titles similar to that of this article.

Reminiscences may be very interesting and amusing to the story-teller and to his immediate circle of friends, but it is only occasionally that such a book creates a wide demand and becomes a best seller of the day.

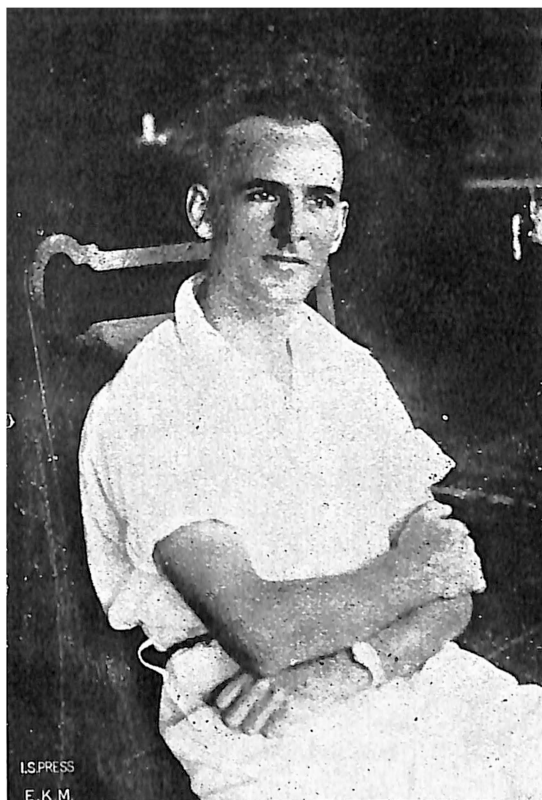
Every sport, every profession practically, has brought forth some keen partisan, who, looking back, has jotted down his memories on paper. To one interested in the particular sport, or to a member of the same profession, it is delightful to draw one's chair up to the fire, light one's pipe and quietly reminisce—if I may use the term—with the author.

It is with this hope in view that I write this article. I do not anticipate that my essay will become a best seller—I would rather it did not—but I would like to think that here and there an old Scout may read this and in reading, bring to mind many of the happy, boyish memories of his own Scouting days.

Leaning back in his chair with the blue smoke curling from his pipe, he may sit again in spirit round many a Camp Fire, where 'adapting his anatomy as well as possible to the irregularities of Nature's upholstery', he enters with zest into the joyousness of the great Brotherhood that is fast encircling the World.

COCHIN,
1931. }

ALAN C. MCKAY.



Mr. ALAN C. McKAY
Assistant District Commissioner.
FOR
BRITISH COCHIN.



THE REMINISCENCES
OF A
BOY SCOUT.

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS

1912—1914

—.0:—



Reminiscences of A Boy Scout.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS. 1912—1914.

As far as I can remember I was never enrolled as a Scout: I simply 'became'. This requires a little explanation, I think, but of a very simple nature.

In a sense I was unfortunate as a youngster in the quiet little village to which I belonged. There were many boys of ages ranging from three to five years older than myself, and there were many three to five years younger. In the pride of youth my seniors scorned my advances to be of their band, and I, in turn, scorned the thought of playing with my juniors. I foolishly fell between two stools and was forced to play games by myself.

I have the vague impression that there were one or two girls of approximately my own years with whom I *could* have joined forces, but such an expedient was not to be thought of!

The Scout Movement was a new one in those days. It had just begun to attract attention, but

sufficient had been focussed upon it to bring it before the boys of our village. A Troop was formed and an old barn utilised as a Headquarters. I was far too young by many moons to become a Scout, and as the Movement progressed, it was with bitter envy I watched my elder brother don his uniform and run off to some meeting or parade.

Much as I tried, I could not keep myself away from the Headquarters or the Scouts themselves. I longed to be a member and could not, but I dogged their every step.

If they went for a march I followed close upon their heels; when they drilled in a nearby park, I hung over the wall to watch them. Occasionally I ran odd messages for them, went to the Headquarters for something that had been forgotten,—a flag or an axe.

Gradually.....gradually.....I was tolerated. I was allowed to sit in the old barn and watch proceedings. Perhaps, my eager wistful face accomplished my desire, or perhaps, the Scout-Master thought that such keenness ought to have its reward.

There were many rebuffs, many snubs, but weathering them all, I somehow became adopted as the mascot of the Troop. At the advanced age of seven I actually became a Scout. Wolf Cubs were not yet an authorised organisation, and, in any case, I hardly could be said to comprise a Cub Pack on my own.!

I was not allowed to pass my Tenderfoot Test, although I knew the requisite points many years before I 'came of age', but I proudly wore the uniform. In all drill movements that my short legs could carry out I was included; on route marches I fell in with the Troop, but usually was permitted to complete the march reposing happily in the light trek-cart we invariably took with us.

There must have been many occasions when I became a nuisance to the older Scouts, but apart from a salutary box on the ears when my cheekiness demanded it, I escaped very lightly.

When eight, I went for my first camp, an experience I had anticipated eagerly for months previous. The very thought of sleeping in a tent was enough to send me into ecstasy unbearable to anyone near me. Without doubt one of my greatest delights lay in the thought that I would be with boys who were my seniors. Childish vanity is a strange thing, but in this instance it is but father to the vanity that clings to many of us throughout our life.

The broad details of my first camp are long since forgotten, but one or two little incidents remain with me. So is it with all camps. The general principles are alike, and in after years it is only the totality of delightful experiences that remains with us, heightened and made permanent by little scenes, like photographic plates, that flash across our memory. These scenes are

usually intensely humorous, or intensely serious,—even tragic,—and in them we find the joys of camping.

I am inclined to digress, to talk for a little on the pleasures of this splendid adventure of Camping Out. To a boy there can be no finer experience, none more calculated to make a man of him. An ideal of the Scout Movement is to make its members 'Good Citizens', but, we must remember that 'before man can make us citizens, great Nature must make us men', and where better can she do this than when we are face to face with her, living in her midst?

I admit I am rabid on this out-of-doors question. To me there can be no more excellent training ground than a well conducted Scout Camp.

"Camping out," one reads, "is a wholesome and sanitary imprudence." If so, may it be my lot to be ever imprudent. I ask for no more than a camper's tent and equipment; a beautiful part of God's Garden and one friend with me—no more. You may have the rushing, bustling cities with their theatres and amusements, you may have all the good things of Life, if you but leave me Nature.

"Life is sweet, brother."

"Do you think so?,"

"Think so! There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon and stars, brother, all sweet things;

there's likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother."

I wonder if you, who have never camped out, find it so? Does not the constant round prove wearisome, the endless conventions a little trying? Do you not sometimes yearn to be away by yourself in the fields, easing your mind on the hilltops, and finding rest for your heart beside a bank of wild primroses?

The next time you feel Life's weariness beset you, come to me and let me take you to the woods.

"What is to be found there?" you say. "Ah,... there's many a balm for bruised hearts and sleep for aching eyes." Who, for instance, who has not lived the open air life, can appreciate to the full the joy there is in lighting a pine-log fire, or in carrying pure water from some crystal spring, and in the eagerness in which meals are prepared...and eaten?

You who live in houses turn for a space to the hills and valleys; leave your comfortable firesides and luxurious studies; take your clearness of eye, your strength of body and your wish to live, to the wide, open spaces and build a hut; make you a camp-fire beside some purling river; or a bed of bracken on the mountain-side. Live out under the sky with the sun and the stars to guide you; have the birds and the trees as your friends, and Nature as your mentor, and tell me if this is not living, living as man ought with God and His goodness at every step?

The rain and the wind, what matter they? Was man made to flee from the weather? If your luck is not what you expect it to be, then put a "p" in front of it and stand four-square in your hardiness. When the frost comes, and the snow, return, if you like, to your fastnesses; return with the effects of your visit to Nature pulsating in every vein; your mind refreshed, your body clean, a man, having lived to see higher things.

Too much trouble, you say? Too much trouble to put a pack on your shoulder and a stout stick in your hand? You are frightened to try it, frightened to shoulder your load, frightened if it rains, frightened at a fox in the bracken—a man—frightened of Nature at her kindest.

Come with me and look at life through the Mirror of Nature and learn to judge its happenings in their true perspective, for, Nature shows a mirror that is true—its reflections have no distortion. Then will you learn as I did, that a late lark singing, or a rabbit on its burrow, may suggest thoughts you never dreamed of.

Many of the achievements the world applauds become but pigmy things when brought face to face with the impenetrable mysteries of Nature, and the unthought of little things are little no longer but of supreme value. Soon you will discover that the quiet prayer you utter before a wonderful sunset brings you nearer the eternal truths than months of religious study.

Why, your very getting up in the morning is turned into a hymn of praise as you turn back the tent-door and see awakening life around you, the grass dew-drenched, the mists lifting from the hill-tops and the sun, rubbing sleepy eyes, smiling down upon you. Soon, perhaps, the rain comes and you lie awake listening to the drops pattering out their musical interlude upon the tightened canvas. This is no sad and disappointing note, but a varying and pleasant one as the wind freshens and puts in its booming note. A sea-gull, far from home, perches on the tent-top for a moment, and utters his plaintive cry: a wheeling curlew echoes it, and the stream runs hoarsely past. A sheep bleats monotonously in some distant field and the rush of the hawk's wings can be heard as winnowing along the ridge he sights the tent and swiftly banking, betakes himself to a lonelier reach. Now is the time to have a good friend with you to whom you can talk of Nature's mysteries. "Nature is the Book of which God is the Author," and by reading deep of the Book we understand Life.

Thresh out your little problems under the stars; when seated round the camp-fire, think over them as, body poised, you dive into the river; turn them round and study them as you cut your firewood or stir your morning porridge.....wake up some sunshine day at the call of the lark to find they are gone, *gone*, forgotten about, swallowed up in bigger, better and brighter things.

But ere you strike your camp and move on to the cities, take a last, long look at God's Garden and offer your thanks to the Gardener.

I fear my digression has been longer than I intended it to be, but I had to have my say. Whenever I begin to write of camping out all the feelings that have been bottled up during days and weeks of office routine demand expression and are apt to run with me.

To return to my first camp: my main impression is that it rained continually during the four days we were there, but that, despite this handicap, a cheerier camp there could not possibly have been. Youth puts up with discomforts easily, and, indeed soon learns to appreciate them as a joke. Whenever that point is reached they lose all their power to depress us.

Three incidents are memorable. The first, that of a grey dawn, when one by one we struggle up to find our ready-made and make-shift pillows have been soaked by the rain collecting round the skirting of the tent. To most of us this means that our spare clothing is temporarily useless as a change; to one it meant no more than a slightly damp pair of boots- a strange head-rest! - but the incident that made the whole scene humorous occurred when the noted glutton of the Troop groaned loudly, and opening the haversack he had utilised as a pillow, drew forth three sopping and strangely shaped loaves of bread he had been hoarding

up against—no, not a rainy day!—but any shortage in the commissariat department !

The following morning I was awakened by the violent agitation of the canvas over me, and by hearing something, or someone, tripping over the guy ropes. Loud whoops and the scamper of feet constrained me to jump up and look outside. I see to this day three wild figures, armed with staves, two in the nightgowns of those unfashionable days and the third in his shirt tails, chasing madly after three curious and blundering cows.

The third memory is of a Sunday dinner; a huge piece of salted pork. It had not ceased raining for days, and cooking of any description was no easy matter, but when it came to the notoriously difficult task of preparing pork we felt a little dismayed. However, in the very late afternoon the pork was ready, and I will never forget how we gathered round the dixie in the store tent and ate our dinner, while the rain lashed down desperately on the canvas.

We finished that camp soaked to the skin as our parents had predicted, but to their amazement, we returned in the very best of spirits.

Week after week during that summer, and the summers that followed, we camped out whenever opportunity offered. A little coterie of the more enthusiastic of us, of which my brother and myself were prominent

members, soon formed, and we missed few chances. Indeed, when no opportunity presented itself, we pitched our tent in a field a few yards from our home, and ensured, at least, that we slept under canvas.

It became a point of honour with us that we should wake ourselves at a reasonable hour, and to this day the habit survives, and no sooner is the sun up than I must be up also. But it took many mornings to cultivate this waking to order, and neighbours often must have been amused when our Mater sent her "B-o-y-E E-S" echoing across the field. We did our best to persuade her to practise bugle playing, but this she firmly refused to do, so we compromised with a Scout whistle !

Scouting was gradually making its way in the district, and although it never became actually popular with the older folks, they realised, at least, that we were better occupied in Scouting than playing around on our own and getting into mischief. They rather laughed at us in those days; they thought we aped grown men too much. When we practised semaphore flag signalling, and tent-pitching and striking, we were dubbed 'toy soldiers', and it took long to convince scoffers that we were a non-militaristic movement.

On our route marches we were followed by supercilious smiles, and by hordes of school children, who, because of their secret envy, were the more venomous in their gibes. Even when camping out we were

subjected to night attacks, and have had our tents let down over us as we slept.

Parents complained Scouting took a lad away from his school books, and even school authorities denied us for a time.

But Baden Powell was steadily advancing his brilliant idea. We Scouts worshipped B. P., and as the years have passed we have found our worship consolidate itself into an admiration and love that are ever increasing. To me, Baden Powell is among the Ten Greatest Men in the World, and one whose efforts to achieve International Peace and Amity deserve the support and acclamation of every Country, Caste and Denomination.

In the International Jamboree of 1929 at Birkenhead, B. P. has wellnigh achieved his ideal. "Every great world poem was once a solitary speculation or vision in the hidden life of some one man" and from the Vision Splendid of Robert Baden Powell has sprung what may yet prove to be the Common Denominator of International Unity and Brotherhood. Beyond doubt, we have in the great Scout Movement the ideal foundation for a League of every Nation in the world.

I will have more to say on this subject further on in this story, and must apologise again for my habit of digression, which, I fear, will remain with me throughout this article.

Although B. P. was a household name to all of us, we had never seen the little figure of our Chief. We knew his glorious Army record; we read his "Adventures of a Spy" and "Scouting for Boys" with avidity, and everything we read tended to make him more of a hero in our eyes. He was a man who had *done* things; a man who had commanded men and fought battles; who had travelled wide and shot wild game. A man who knew Nature and Woodcraft, and could interpret them to us and initiate us into their mysteries. He knew the genus Boy, understood his delight in make-believe, his wish for a little authority and opportunity to use initiative. He realised the inventive spirit of Youth and the inherent savage in all of us; he knew how we would react to skilful discipline.

B. P. showed his absolute genius when he drew out his Scout Rules. For well over twenty years of Scouting, these Rules have remained practically unaltered, and a new recruit still swears the Oath that B. P. used in enrolling his first Scouts. They have stood the acid test of time and it is difficult to think of any point upon which they could be improved.

Our Chief gave the world an Ideal of which he must be proud, and we longed to see him and hear him speak. I remember we heard he would pass through our little village on his way to some meeting further North. We hung about the road for hours waiting for his car, and it was with bitter disappointment we learned he had taken another route.

But the turn of our Troop was to come, and to my intense grief I was unable to be with them on the great occasion.

It was the anniversary of Bannockburn, and a Rally was held on the historic battleground. Being still a youngster I could not parade with the Troop, and to my mortification they went to Bannockburn without me. They brought back great tales, and were delighted at having seen B. P. in the flesh, but to my rather un-Scoutlike joy, I learned that he had not talked to any of them. I could not bear to think he might have addressed them while I ate my heart out at home. Strangely enough I was to be the first of our little Troop to meet him—but that must keep until later.

We were beginning to take our place in the public life of the District. At the Annual Agricultural Show we gave displays of tent-pitching, and obstacle races with our trek-cart; we made ourselves useful in all functions where voluntary aid was required.

And always we camped out. Content, at first, to keep within walking-distance of home, we now began to strike farther afield. Gradually our usefulness, our ability, and, I trust, our manhood, increased.

We were faced with many difficulties; our Scout Masters and Troop Leaders had problems to solve that were by no means easy. They had no precedent to fall back on, and had to exercise their own judgment in every case.

If a Scout committed a theft or told a lie, or did some mean trick, how was he to be punished? Our officers were not parents or Schoolmasters; there could be no corporal punishment in our Movement. Shame a lad too much and he might feel unable to face his fellows, and leave the Troop; let him off too lightly and the fault in his character might persist and deepen. How, then, to bring home to him the enormity of his offence? A ticklish question for a young man, or youth, to have to answer.

Many methods were tried, and it speaks volumes for their success that once and once only during my association with the Movement have I known a Scout be dismissed from the Troop with ignominy. Chance after chance was offered him, but of no avail, and I am sure, that, to this day not one of the Scouts who paraded at the Dismissal have forgotten a single incident of it. Our Scoutmaster took the matter as a personal failure; his manner and carriage showed us how desperately he felt it. When the dismissed Scout was requested to hand back his uniform and badges and leave the Troop, we youngsters sensed the tragedy of the occasion, and the impression made upon us can never be effaced.

I may have reason later, to talk of the methods we employed to show the transgressors of the Scout Law, the error of their ways. Up to the period of which I have been writing we were still in a more or less embryo stage, and it was only with the outbreak of the Great War that we really came into our own.



Reminiscences of A Boy Scout.

———:0:———

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT WAR.

1914—1918.

———



Reminiscences of A Boy Scout.

CHAPTER II.

THE GREAT WAR. 1914—1918.

I was summer-holidaying on the sea-coast when the War broke out. I was only a youth, not even in my teens, and to me War spelled one thing and one thing only—Adventure. I imagine it was the same to most boys in those days. We were all madly thrilled and wildly envious of those who were old enough to take part.

We could not realise the deeper issues, and perhaps it was as well. Many of us had to participate before the War ended, and it was fortunate that we could think of it, even in later years, as still a Great Adventure.

Little seemed changed in our small village; here and there a familiar face dropped out to reappear a few months later in khaki; now and then regiments marched

through the streets and we thrilled to see them. Then our Scoutmaster left us, to be followed by our Assistant Scoutmaster and one or two of the older Scouts. In a short time our Troop was nearly disbanded; there were no executive officers left to help us to carry on. The War was a bigger thing than Scouting, and the War came first. Fortunately, we realised within ourselves that, in time, there would be work for us to do, and we determined to "Be Prepared."

'Service' was a word frequently heard in those days: 'Active service', 'war service', 'secret service'-and it was borne in upon us that we could be of service also. As a Troop we hung together, denuded although our ranks were, and with the older Scouts among us gradually taking responsibility, we offered our services to the Local Authorities for any purposes that they might see fit to use us.

Multifarious those uses proved to be. Never did we regret our decision to carry on at all costs and do our bit, little though it might be. As we expected, we were laughed at; older folks told us we would be more of a nuisance than anything else, but they had told us that before. B. P. in the 'Scout Magazine' gave us our cue and we were ready to take it.

During the early and black days of the War when Belgian refugees were flying from their country, feeling ran high in Britain, and in every district Charity

Concerts were organised for various Relief Funds. Here was work to our hand and we jumped to it. There were tickets to be sold, halls to be decorated, chairs and forms to be collected, a hundred and one messages to be executed, programmes to be sold; there was a vast 'clearing-up' to be attended to, d'smantlings and the returning of properties.

With our large and small trek-carts we were never off the roads; with our eager hands we did work that must have cut down the running expenses by many pounds. Dressed in our serviceable uniform we made efficient programme sellers.

I like to think we did our part so satisfactorily, and so willingly, that, throughout the whole period of the War, there was not one such Concert, Sale of Work or similar undertaking in which we were not asked to take part. It became a byword in the town: "Ask the Scouts—they'll do it", and to my certain knowledge we never failed. It was often hard work and trying work; we frequently were asked to tackle jobs that really were for older and stronger men, but we 'wrestled' through. The older men were not there to do them, so we did our best.

I have memories of miles tramped in pouring rain, in winter snow and sleet, selling tickets—always a thankless task, even be it for a charitable cause—of weary hours engaged in pulling a laden trek-cart, and of

Saturday afternoons spent in 'sweeping out' and preparing halls for evening use.

We were given trust in those days and we were proud of it. We collected money by many means and gave strict reckoning of our accounting. I well remember a Concert in the local Parish Church at which many of us were selling programmes. The Concert started, and our duties over, we handed our haversacks to the Treasurer.

Early the next morning a worried little Scout came running into the Treasurer's office and laid a threepenny piece on his table.

"I am sorry, sir, but I found this in my pocket last night. It must have stuck." B. P. again—"A Scout's Honour is to be trusted."

Gradually we took over the whole organisation of such concerts and meetings. Given a date we would have everything ready. We came to be relied upon and we justified that reliance.

We read in the daily papers that old paper was urgently required. Certain firms were offering so much. I think it was a shilling a hundredweight—for it. Here was another opportunity. Night after night, when we were free from school, we went from door to door collecting old and waste paper. Housewives began to hoard for us, and we were successful in obtaining the

permission of local mill-owners to remove the thousands of cardboard spindles that ordinarily were burned. We adopted many schemes for collecting paper, and although at this late day I cannot remember the total sum collected, I know we sent in a useful contribution to some War Charity.

While busy paper-collecting, another cry was raised in the press—"Old Bottles." We took up the slogan! We scoured the countryside for empty bottles until the sight of them nearly made us ill.

At first we enjoyed the hunt; we discovered that bottles could be quite interesting. They were of such a variety of shapes, they had held such a variety of contents. We used to hold amusing little competitions guessing exactly what the contents *had* been. At times I fear we transgressed against the law. Bottles cracked and not fit for use we placed in rows upon the walls and threw stones at them. It was an exciting, if dangerous, game.

But our fun really started when we took upon ourselves to visit the large county houses. To our delight, at many of them we came upon colossal stacks of wine bottles that, for countless years, had been taken from the cellars. They were hidden in spiders' webs and mossy mould, most of them; others had been recently added. The labels on the bottles were sufficient to thrill us. We learned more about wines in those days than

was really good for us. It became a habit to shake each bottle to discover if it were empty, and to our delight we frequently 'raised a thimble-ful', although I defy any of my companions to truthfully say they enjoyed their stolen drinks!

We received a fair price for our bottles, but, oh! it was tiring work pulling our heavy trek-cart the last mile of a long journey! As we had to clean the bottles, take off all labels, classify them and pack them securely in huge crates, our Headquarters was a busy place at times.

During this time the War was becoming more of a reality to us. A military camp had been established outside the town and the streets were thronged with soldiers. A little intermediate aerodrome was constructed about four miles distant, and aeroplanes were constantly circling over the town.

One of our oldest friends, one of the first Scouts in our village, came Home to us, and we laid him to rest in the little cemetery facing the Loch and the hills. He had been killed in a flying accident, and, as we followed the gun-carriage along the winding road, we knew the sorrow of war. Under the outspread wings of his regiment which were carved on his tombstone, was written "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." He had died as a Scout should, serving his King and his Country.

As the months passed our Roll of Honour lengthened. We could point to old members of our Troop serving on every front. We were too young yet, but our scope of activity was extending. More and more with every month were we proving the manhood that lay in the Scout Movement, realising the undertakings we could attempt and carry out with success.

Coastguards were called for. Only two of our number were able to take up this responsible work; it was a full-time job and many of us were still at school. The two who volunteered, after a period of training, departed to take up their duties on the East Coast, and lonely though they found their duties, they were proud young lads and we greatly envied them.

In the huge camp outside the town, Y. M. C. A. helpers were called for and quickly provided. Here, again, we found an outlet for our energies, and we took our turn in helping to serve and entertain the troops. Personally, I scored well during this period. I was smitten with the craze of collecting cigarette-cards, and knowing my peca-dillo, the Manager of the Y. M. allowed me to go through all the cigarette packets before they were sold and extract the cards. Perhaps this was scarcely fair, but I solaced my conscience with the thought that there were few soldiers who would bother to keep the 'fag-pictiers' for a young son or brother.

During those disturbing days the police had heavy duties to perform. Air raids were, perhaps, not

frequent, but while there existed the possibility of them, lights had to be shaded, arrangements made for a sudden evacuation of the village, the townspeople informed of any new measures passed for the safety and good of the community; to the police fell the making of all necessary provisions and the responsibility of seeing that they were adhered to.

Being a country district this did not always prove an easy matter; distances were great and the police few in number; so we Scouts offered our services to the Chief Constable. We were accepted immediately and a new sphere of activity was entered. Several of us earned our Hundred Days' War Service Badge for the services we rendered at this time. With the Special Constabulary Force, we augmented the Police to such an extent that all orders were quickly carried out, and the safety of the community was thus the greater assured.

About now we gained to our ranks one who threw his whole heart and soul into the Scout Movement, one who eventually became Chief Scout Commissioner for Scotland and the finest Organiser the Movement has known. I cannot quite remember how his interest in us first began. Like myself, I think he drifted into Scouting.

Son of an old aristocratic house, heir to a baronetcy and a beautiful estate; educated at Eton and Oxford, and for a time in several of our Embassies on

the Continent, he was a man of exceptional experience. His appearance was against him; he was six feet five inches when he stood erect, but his body was so attenuated that he walked with a slight stoop. He looked a positive skeleton, yet his vitality was amazing. At one time on a ranch as a cowboy in Canada, his companions immediately nicknamed him "Slim Jim", while during the War a soldier once said of him. "If you looked at him sideways you would call 'Absent'."

We called him the "Herr." He became the Commissioner of our Troop and we used to refer to him as a Commission—er; gradually this abbreviated itself to the Herr. The name never became general; it remained a term of affection among a few of us, and the Herr himself was proud of his title, knowing the affection with which it was used.

The Herr intended to take up political work, but having failed at one election, the War broke out before he could contest another. He immediately offered his services, but doctor after doctor turned him down. He must have volunteered a score of times in all, but always the same reply. Realising he could not take an active part as a soldier, the Herr determined that active he would be in other directions. He took up Red Cross work and in a short time was appointed Red Cross Commissioner for the Societies of two counties. He never spared himself; he organised hospitals to a pitch undreamed of before; he was instrumental in converting

county houses into Auxiliary Hospitals; he expected, and was given, an efficiency that spoke volumes for his power and personality.

And in his short intervals of leisure he began to take an interest in the Scouts. Gradually this interest became paramount in his life, and after the War was over the Herr devoted himself to the Movement, and Scotland owes a heavy debt to him for his work among the Scottish Troops.

From the day of his accepting the County Commissioner-ship, our Troop took on a new lease of life. Scouting became a broader thing than we had imagined, but it was not until later that the Herr had sufficient time to be with us as often as he wished. We were all the busier in those days! Scouting work pure and simple was at a discount.

As the necessity for us acting as Police orderlies passed, the Herr enrolled us as Hospital orderlies in one of the close-by Auxiliary Hospitals. We peeled potatoes, scrubbed floors; we ran messages and did fag work for the convalescing soldiers. Week in, week out, some of us were on duty, fulfilling to the letter our Law that a Scout is of use to others.

We had many interesting experiences, many humorous ones, and many days when we were fed up with the whole thing. Occasionally we were able to snatch a week-end off for a Camp—and how we revelled

in those opportunities! We were doing men's work in many instances, but we loved to get away from everything and be mere boys again.

There was one item in our programme of voluntary work that we greatly enjoyed—assisting in running the various *fetes* that were held in the grounds of the fine old County House of Sir. B., the father of the Herr. Those *fetes* were most exciting occasions, and they gave us an insight into the tremendous amount of preparatory labour necessary, that proved of immense value to us in later years. For weeks we were kept busy in arranging stalls, organising sports and side-shows, engaging bands, and dealing gingerly with an army of helpers, paid and otherwise.

We used a large marquee as an Intelligence Bureau from which the whole operations of the *fete* were directed. The Herr, of course, was the 'Big Noise', with the senior Scouts as Departmental Supervisors, and the youngsters doing orderly work! Others were in charge of Side-Shows, Aunt Sallies, Lucky Dips, etc. One poor lad once spent a whole afternoon "ca-ing the han'le" of an ice-cream freezer!

A friend of the Herr's, the C. O. of an aerodrome not very far distant, always sent over a squadron of aeroplanes to the *fetes*, and the manœuvres and stunting of those craft generally proved the most thrilling feature of the day. Other thrills were to be had, although of

a different nature. It once fell to my lot to take charge of an Aunt Sally show, a very popular institution among the younger generation. I was rushing around picking up balls and giving out the usual six a penny, when a naval officer approached and asked me if I would take charge of his son for half-an-hour, keeping him supplied with as many balls as he desired. He gave me five shillings and remarked that Aunt Sally was in for a thin time of it. The officer was Admiral of the Fleet, Sir David Beatty, now Earl Beatty!

Needless to say we Scouts enjoyed our work at the *fetes*. Although there were many wearisome tasks to be undertaken, we usually scored heavily towards evening in the way of tea, and in the finishing up of ices, sweets and cakes left over in the stalls.

So the War dragged on to its delayed conclusion, and when the end came, although we were still too young to have fought, we felt we had done *some-thing* to help our Country. We were only kids; we thought as such and often acted as such, but, looking back, we knew we had put our backs into many a hard and weary task and brought it to a successful ending. We had proved that our Motto of "Be Prepared" was one that we could live up to. During the whole course of the War the Boy Scouts proved their worth and took their place as members of one of the foremost Movements of the day.

Such were our experiences during the Great European War, but before I go on to the third part of my

Reminiscences I would mention one incident that left me the envied of the whole Troop. I met B. P.

I cannot remember how I heard of it, but hear I did that Baden Powell was coming south from a visit in the North of Scotland, and that he would require to wait for over an hour at our little railway station for a connection. The opportunity was too good to miss. I told my brother and others I was going to the station, but they threw cold water on my scheme.

“Certainly not”, they said, “Ridiculous idea; pushing yourself forward. B. P. doesn’t want to see *you*”.

No, perhaps he did not, but *I* wanted to see *him*, so in company with the son of the G. O. C. of the Military Camp, who had lately joined our ranks, I set off for the station.

We were only youngsters; B. P. was our hero—we felt we *dare* not go up to him and speak to him. However, we had a little plan. Our Tenderfoot Badges were in our button-holes, the sign of our Scout-hood, and we thought that if we walked up and down the platform B. P. could not fail to notice us, and if he so desired, speak to us.

Two very frightened, very junior little Scouts walked onto the station platform. It was raining hard and nearly dark, but within a few seconds we saw our Chief and our hearts beat the faster. Know him? We

had studied his photographs for years; to us he was as well known by his photographs as the Prince of Wales is to the man in the street of today. There could be no mistaking the little figure.

As we passed he looked at us and we saluted. The Chief Scout gravely returned our salute and in a moment our dream had come true. He advanced and shook hands. We told him of our subterfuge to gain his attention and he was delighted at our eagerness. We were his Scouts—he wished to meet every Scout in the Movement if he could. He told us something that made us very proud. He said that having an hour to wait at a railway station was always an uninteresting affair, and that when it was raining, the wait became doubly irksome.

“But now I can look back with pleasure upon my wait here. I have met two more of my Scouts.”

The Chief talked of many things; the Movement that meant so much to him—and to us: the War; a clever display he had witnessed in the North. He asked us questions regarding our Troop, our numbers and the work we did.

We stood happily at the salute as his train drew out, and as he waved “Goodbye” to us. To me, this was the most thrilling incident of the whole War period.



REMINISCENCES OF A BOY SCOUT.

CHAPTER III.

OUR ANNUAL CONCERTS.

1918—1923.



Reminiscences of A Boy Scout.

CHAPTER III.

OUR ANNUAL CONCERTS. 1918—1923.

I am somewhat diffident in beginning the narration of my experiences from the end of the War until circumstances forced me to cease active participation in the Scout Movement. There is so much to tell, and yet I feel that my description of those years will be lacking in many important points. It is easy to describe actual and active experiences, but not so easy to translate into words the mental growth of boys making their way through adolescence to manhood, or the extension of an experimental training camp into a world-wide Movement.

Visions are ethereal things, elusive. It is impossible to put them on paper. Clear in the mind of the visionary, the moment he attempts to clothe them in words, how awkward and ill-suited our alphabet becomes.

It may be wondered what visions and mental reachings towards the future have to do with a bald narrative such as this, but during the immediate post-War years there were opportunities given to Scouts as well as to men, to dream dreams and see visions. Every movement must have its visionaries; those who can see beyond the material present to a more prosperous, more peaceful and more ideal future. The Scout Movement, fortunately, had such men, and although, in common with every other organisation, many visions proved abortive, many materialised.

From out of the horror of the War came the magnificent Scout League of Nations that met in London in 1920—the International Scout Jamboree held in Olympia. Lord Baden Powell has worked no greater wonder, engineered no greater triumph than this. In every historical work that is written concerning this era, I trust due mention will be made of this amazing concourse of Scouts, gathered from nearly every country of the world.

While nations still bickered over Treaties, and Reparations and Boundaries; while the War was still a storm lately past that had left dismay and suffering behind it, Baden Powell brought into one Camp Scouts of every warring nation. Without fuss, or talk or acrimony, French, German, Turkish and British camped side by side, and a new phase in International Relationship had begun.

It took a visionary to conceive this; it took other visionaries to carry out the ideal. It required Scouts who looked upon Scouting as more than an open air, healthy sport, to co-operate and make the ideal *live*—but live it did, and the Movement desires no finer monument to its purpose.

When a movement that has originated locally becomes national, there must be a relative increase in the breadth and the depth of thought, not only of the organisers, but of the members. Local ideas are good in their way, but they must be subservient to the ideas of the nation. One must look beyond the village boundaries to the national boundaries—which means a fuller life.

If this is so regarding local and national life and thought, how much more so between national and international life and thought. Suddenly, as it were, the Scout Movement encircled the globe. Freed from the strain and tumult of war, the youth of every nation turned to Scouting; they turned to Baden Powell as the fountain-head; they turned to the Scouts of Britain to gain experience, ideas and the Scout outlook. Nationalism was not enough for us Scouts at Home, something broader was required of us and demanded of us—internationalism. We were a force that the world was beginning to recognise; we were no longer “only the Scouts.”

This digression has been long and tortuous, but I hope it has served its purpose of showing that in the

post-War years we had much food for thought. We young lads who were growing up to manhood, accepting the control of Troops, and the training and guidance of the younger generation, had many problems to face. We had deeper issues to study, and a wider education to inculcate. We had to impress upon our boys the importance, and the power of the Movement to which they belonged.

For this purpose it was as if a special tool had been forged—in the Herr we possessed the one man who could supply the necessary inspiration.

War work nobly done, the Herr threw himself into the Scout Movement wholeheartedly. Politics, Society, everything went before the Call of Youth. Our Commissioner made Scouting the be all and the end all of his life. He never spared himself, or us, in the fine work he set out to accomplish.

Difficulties had to be faced. Plans had to be formulated, schemes brought to fruition—in the midst of it all was the Herr, his coat off, his thin body alive, his mind alert, his restless hands ever occupied, a cigarette ever in his mouth. Not only in our village, but from end to end of Scotland, not only in Scotland, but in Gilwell, London, England, did this marvellous personality make itself felt. A genius at organisation, a demon for work and a born leader, the Herr became a name in Scouting.

Laugh at him? Everyone laughed at him to begin with, but only at the beginning. Most geniuses *are* laughed at until the world realises the laugh is against it.

It is beyond the scope of this article to narrate in detail the various activities of the Herr. Many of them were in the wider sphere of Scouting already referred to as being beyond the confines of a village or a nation, but I cannot refrain from stating that the first Commissioner of our little Troop became Scout Commissioner for Scotland, the Editor of the "Scottish Scout", a Camp Chief of Wemyss Firs Training Camp, a Member of the Executive Committee of the Olympia Jamboree and a Member of the Headquarters Council of the Scout Association.

And to us—to the little Troop that had suffered such vicissitudes of fortune? None of us will ever be able to pay sufficient tribute to our Herr. There was a band of us that formed round him, the older Scouts to whom he opened his heart and gave glimpses of the nature that was his, and between those lads and the Herr there grew up an affection that was very beautiful.

When he passed—worn out by work his body was not strong enough to do—we placed our simple wreath on his grave bearing the words "He lit the torch....." That was all—that was the man, his work and the legacy he left behind him. He lit the torch.....I wonder

if there was one of us worthy to pass it on? We have failed, we have been unable to give the high service to the Movement which he did, we have baulked at difficulties his glorious courage would have scoffed at, but — the torch is still lit. To the small band to whom our Commissioner was 'the Herr' there was bequeathed an influence that can never be forgotten.

The heart went out of us when he died. The old Troop was becoming scattered; we were men now and other duties called; a younger generation were enjoying the ground we had prepared. We slipped out of things; we were not wanted as we had been before, we were too 'old'. Scouting was as real to us as ever it had been—once a Scout always a Scout—but something rare, something not vouchsafed to everyone, had gone.

There will be much of the Herr in the pages that follow. I hope I can delineate his character in sketches that will show him to you. He was a man worth knowing and a thorough Scout.

During and after the War we had been enrolling so many recruits in our ranks that for the first time for many years a full Troop of thirty was in existence.

With such a number a new Headquarters became an urgent necessity. For some time we had been using an old stone barn, but it was highly unsuited to the purpose. Our funds, however, were negligible, and as

equipment, apparatus, and many other items were required, we set about raising the necessary wherewithal.

Ever since the inception of the Troop we had been self-supporting; we had never taken round the hat or appealed for subscriptions in any way. Usually Local Associations were formed, the Members of which donated an annual sum, and had a certain control over the Troops under their Association. This ensured regular funds, without which many Troops would have found it impossible to carry on.

We wished to form such an Association in our own County, but the Herr said 'No.' In effect, "We have carried on for years without appealing for money. Let us *still* endeavour to carry on on our own resources". The strange part was, that although the Herr soon became busily engaged in forming Local Associations all over Scotland, to the end he was against one for his own County!

Such was one of the contradictions in his character, of which there were many. Another that caused us acute anxiety was, that although a born organiser, he did not realise the value of money. Money ran through his hands like water, and "Expenses" was always a heavy item on the debit side of any undertaking we staged. And we staged many!

From now on, to keep ourselves in funds, we ran yearly "Concerts" in the winter, and usually during

the summer we held a Jumble Sale or an Exhibition of sorts.

Relying upon memory alone, I think the first of those was an Exhibition of Arms and Armour. We made our Headquarters as presentable as it ever could be, and lined its walls with trestle tables on which we displayed a motley collection of implements of war, loaned from numerous friends in the district. The collection was really quite interesting and representative, the older weapons being interspersed with those used in the recent catastrophe.

Amusingly enough, we did not adhere strictly to Arms and Armour, but ran sideshows of Stamps, Mystery Novelties, old China, anything out of the way we could lay our hands on!

Charging the modest sum of one shilling a head, we "earned" our first "salary", and inspired the Herr with an enthusiasm for such undertakings that never faded. During the strenuous times that followed we frequently had reason to think this enthusiasm of too high an order; we were constantly in dire straits and full of worries as to how things were to be accomplished, but, man of surprises as he was, the Herr never failed us. Certainly at times we scraped through with such a narrow margin that belief in ourselves was somewhat shaken, but each succeeding year found us as confident as ever.

Scorning to use sketches especially written for performance by Scouts, the Herr set to to write his own! "Why not?," he said, "May as well have a shot at it. We can always fall back on the others if necessary." The right spirit!

A Hall was engaged for our performances; the Herr insisted upon two, if not three evenings. Advertisements were printed, leaflets distributed and so on—Grand Scout Concert! This was all very excellent, but three weeks before the actual dates the masterpieces of the Herr would not be completed! Everyone would be in a panic but the Herr himself. Oh, he would soon finish them off. He had got the idea all right.

He would return to his study full of enthusiasm; far into the night his typewriter would click, and the pile of cigarette ashes would increase alarmingly. C. B. Cochrane could not surpass some of the grandiose schemes the Herr conceived; but he over-estimated the histrionic ability of the young lads who were called upon to act the parts assigned to them.

The Herr's plays were worthy of a better fate than they received, but he would never think of using them outside our little circle.

The sketch completed—usually in three, or more acts—the heart-breaking, hair-raising work of rehearsing began, and not only rehearsing, but the construction of scenery, the planning of costumes and the hundred and

one details attendant upon the successful production of any play. And, remember, all to be done in three weeks!

I wish to dwell at length on our annual performances; they were amazing, not only to ourselves, but to our audiences. We thought of their approach with mixed feelings, a sense of keen anticipation and of utter dread; a knowledge of hard work and constant worry, but, when over, of delightful memory.

We frequently held our rehearsals in the County home of our Commissioner's father—one of the finest in Scotland. A House full of art treasures, beautiful furniture and priceless china. There was something humorous, something touching and almost paradoxical in seeing the young Scouts, sons of miners, labourers and boatmen, mostly, rehearsing in the stately Ballroom.

The old Romneys and Raeburns looked down upon them in amused and astonished, but always dignified, silence; while the heavy Dutch carvings of the ceiling, the dark oak panelling of the walls, the smooth polished floor, and the immensity of the room were the absolute antithesis of anything the youngsters were accustomed to, or had ever seen.

They would stand in awed silence, and their stiff acting was rendered all the more awkward and ungainly by reason of the magnificent setting. It was impossible to make them speak up; whispers that echoed ghostily down the room were all they could bring themselves to utter.

But gradually the tension would relax. Before entering the Ballroom each boy had to remove his heavy, tackety boots, so as to prevent damage to the floor. This frequently revealed holes in the heels or toes wagging in the fresh air, that made us shudder as we glanced guiltily round at the splendid Lords and Ladies on the walls. Soon it was discovered that with boots off the Ballroom floor made an ideal 'slide', and the 'supers' and 'extras' would amuse themselves in this harmless manner until they were required.

At times things took a more serious turn. Hide and seek in such a house was a thrilling game; in fact it amounted to a science. There were suits of armour to hide in, statuary to creep behind, rooms, in scores to explore. It was unfortunate—so the Herr mildly put it—when one youngster, hearing steps, rushed out and knocked the aged (and irascible) baronet in the stomach!

The Herr's father hardly approved of his son's use of his residence as a rehearsal theatre, and his occasional unexpected visits to the Ballroom caused instant consternation! Every lad was smitten dumb and the scene could not proceed until the Laird withdrew.

I often wondered what the proud line of ancestors on the walls would have thought if they could have heard the little plays being enacted. Perhaps acting the very part, that of some ancient noble, a

youngster would puff out his chest, point haughtily to some erring varlet at his feet, turn to his courtiers and declaim :

“Tak’ that mon awa’ !”

The correct speaking of the King’s English was an accomplishment we would not instil !

On another occasion I had the unusual experience of seeing the Herr paralysed with sudden fear. We were engaged with the senior Scouts on an intricate piece of Eastern imagery. As the Herr said, “You know the sort of thing, a lot of sand, a moon risin’ over a mosque, Ismail Allibabba calling the faithful to prayer, a camel or two.” We were having difficulty with the “camel or two,” when the Herr’s voice trailed off, his face went white and the cigarette in his mouth dropped to the floor. At the far end of the room a game of tig was reaching an exciting stage. The two finalists were chasing round and round a cabinet in which reposed a priceless collection of old china, treasured above all else in the eyes of the Laird.

As the two lads roused by the game, rushed round, they put out a hand to steady themselves, grasping the sides of the cabinet so as to enable them to negotiate the curves more expeditiously. The cabinet swayed, rocked on its legs.....!

We got to it in time, but the incident unnerved us. We had to leave the “camels” and go on with something less intricate.

Once, in the midst of our rehearsals, we were honoured by an invitation to tea with the Laird and his Lady. We issued strict instructions that every Scout was to tell his mother that if he came with dirty ears or neck, he would not be permitted to stay to tea. So with faces shining and redolent of soap, with boots squeaking and hands clammy, the Troop filed into the Dining-room.

It proved one of the most intensely amusing meals I have ever attended, and I trust our host and hostess were similarly, entertained, as I think they must have been. Conversation was, to say the least, spasmodic. But the disappearance of little hot buttered scones was so amazing that the supply could scarce cope with the demand. With a buttered scone held tightly in either hand our lads were supremely happy.

We had warned them beforehand that when her Ladyship rose to leave the room they should all stand and that one should open the door for her. Unfortunately we had not named one especial Scout, with the result that the door was besieged by about a dozen eager youngsters all struggling to reach the handle!

Such were some of our adventures in the "Big Hoose", some of the little incidents that made our hearts cease beating for a time, and afterward tickled us by their humour.

We had other scenes as heartbreaking and yet as humorous ; we were learning by bitter experience the pitfalls that are ever ready to trap the unwary in the theatrical world.

Our Headquarters was turned into a workshop where everyone got in everybody else's way; where there was a continual hunt for a lost hammer, and where agonised shrieks betokened that someone's finger had been treated as a nail!

"Stage parts" were propped round the walls; weird unsightly canvases with horrible daubs upon them were grouped in rows to dry. The Herr assured us that they would look all right at a distance, but many a time we have blushed at the crudeness of our handiwork. It is splendid fun lashing away with a whitewash brush at an empty canvas; we entered into it with zest, but none of us ever wrote R. A. after our name!

The Herr, half a dozen nails in his mouth, besides the eternal cigarette, a hammer poised over a plank of wood, would direct operations all round the hut.

"A little more green on that one, old man. Meant to be a forest, don't y'know?"

"I say, Peter, don't nail those cross-pieces too firmly; they've got to come apart for Act 2." So it went on.

One of our plays was entitled "The Shellcombe Fire Brigade." We had to construct a fire-engine—and we made a beauty! Gleaming with red paint, perfect gold-lettering on the sides, little ladders, axes and buckets—we lavished time and care upon this engine and were proud of it.

When completed we took it down the street to the Hall in which our performance was to be held. It ran beautifully on its red wheels, an admiring crowd of small children following our triumphal progress. Then the blow fell...our engine would not go through the rather narrow doorway of the Hall!

There was nothing to do but to knock it to pieces and build a smaller one in its stead. Fire Engine No. 2. was *not* a work of art. Indeed, it had to be held together until we got it finally fixed upon the stage.

I do not think there was one single Concert in which we had time in hand. Always there was a rush at the end that drove us to desperation. On the morning of *the* day, the muddle would be indescribable; the Herr's temper would be sadly frayed, and woe betide any luckless youngster who did not 'jump to it' quickly! The Herr would work throughout the day like a man possessed, frequently forgetting that one must eat to live. If it had not been for a worthy character named

Bella—of whom more anon—who brought him cups of tea and sandwiches at odd hours, he would not have touched food the whole day long.

Scenery had to be fixed in position; the footlights made ready; the curtain running smoothly; the whole Hall prepared. While behind the stage.....!

I have always regarded the handling of our lads during those performances as more difficult than at any other time. One required wonderful patience and self-control, amazing tact and downright temper, to prevent the disorder becoming absolute chaos. The novelty of having their faces painted, and being arrayed in divers strange garments produced an excitement bordering on hysteria.

They would fly up and down stairs, in and out of dressing-rooms, shrieking to one another; frequently tearing or soiling the dresses that had taken so long to make, and inconveniencing all of us who were endeavouring to do a job of work. Then the Herr would rise in his wrath. A sudden silence would fill the Hall, broken only by the rasping of a saw and the tap of a hammer somewhere behind the stage. The youngsters would slip crestfallen away, and for a space there would be peace. But only for a space!

One very annoying habit they had was that of looking through the curtain to see how the Hall was filling up. I would come upon two of them thus engaged;

“Hi, Jimmy, there’s yer mithers.”

“Aye, and wee Jean wi’her. D’ye think they’ll see me?”

“Gosh, what a folk! A’ll never remember ma lines.”

The orchestra would start; the curtain would be due to go up, but no, the Herr was still busily engaged with a hammer. The orchestra would play a further selection. There would be a stamping of feet in the body of the Hall, a few coughs. “Right,” the Herr would whisper, and up would go the curtain five seconds too soon, displaying to a delighted audience the shirt-sleeved figure of the Herr caught in the lime-light, hammer in hand, an embarrassed expression on his face as he turned and fled!

Unfortunately I cannot enter fully into descriptions of our various plays, much as I would like to. The space required would be too great. But I must mention one or two incidents that helped to amuse the audience as much as they horrified us.

There had been a duel; one of the contestants had been wounded in the hand. The surgeon was forced to amputate a finger, and to convince the audience of the reality of the scene he threw a cleverly made wax finger across the stage, saying “That’s that!”

But the finger went a little further than it was intended to; it plopped right into the centre of the

orchestra and disappeared with a musical crash into the interior of the cello!

During another performance a bazaar scene was being enacted, another of the Herr's Eastern effects that he so loved. A goat had been commandeered to lend colour—I almost said odour—to the scene. It was to be led across the stage at intervals, with tiny water-panniers strapped to its sides. Until its stage debut was due, we tethered it to some properties down a little alleyway leading to stage.

I was in the midst of a peroration. Stroking my long white beard I was apostrophising the sun that beat down upon my head. The merchants of the bazaar gave ear to me, and throwing up my arms I cried, "Oh noble sun....."...there was a terrific crash off stage, a shout, a wild bleating, and then a frightened and bewildered goat careered at full speed into the bazaar!

Wishing to anticipate his stage career by a few moments, Billy had strained so valiantly at his tether that he pulled over the stage properties, broke his rope and ruined my peroration!

Later on in the same scene one of the merchants made his exit, his flowing garments rustling behind. In a second or two he rushed onto the stage again, his face a picture of acute and perplexed agony.

"Hi, sir, the goat's chawed ma breek!s"

Another lad was once taking the part of a prosperous grocer of ample proportions. Underneath his wide apron was stuffed a pillow that gave the necessary appearance of avoirdupois. But the pillow proved refractory, and it rather ruined the scene to witness the grocer constantly 'hitching up' his stomach !

I say ruin—but more often than not such unrehearsed effects were the making of our shows. Once arouse the risible faculties of an audience and the darest act will prove a matter for prolonged amusement.

Before leaving this part of my Scouting career, I would write a little concerning her whom we call Bella.

Wherever help was needed—there was Bella. Be it a Mothers' Meeting, a cricket match or a Farmers' Dance Bella was sure to be there. I have heard it said that she is a book character, but I would rather say she is a character from life itself. A book could be written about her, because she is the stuff of which books are made, not a character made by a book.

If only Dickens could have spoken perfect broad Scots, then Dickens would have been the man to write her life. But the Bellas of this world give little help to the biographer, and pay little heed to those who praise them. And yet the one of whom I write once uttered a remark that conveyed much.

She was observing the lovely wreaths that were being taken to the grave of a fellow-villager.

"Aye, they're bonny flo'ers", she said, but I'd raither hae a rose the noo, than bouquets when I'm deid." How few of us think of giving roses to our fellows while they are still with us!

Bella was no respecter of persons. Not that she ever went beyond her station; that would have been impossible in such a woman. But she had an easy, motherly way of treating people that endeared her to everyone.

An International Curling Match was being held on the Loch. Huge marquees had been erected, and Bella was superintending the feeding of the curlers. Hundreds of hot pies and puddings, piping hot tea and coffee were being eagerly sought after. Bella noticed a rink standing apart and went up to them, inviting them to the marquees.

The skip replied, "Oh, we won't bother you, thanks. We have brought our own food with us."

"Bother me, indeed, you'll bother me a'richt if ye gang an' staund there drinking cold tea. Come awa' inside."

The skip smiled and told his men to follow 'the good lady'.

Someone said 'D'you know who that was you were speaking to just now, Bella? That was the Duke of Atholl."

“Whit wey did ye no’ gie me a dunt? But he should o’kent better than keep his men oot in the cauld.”

The Herr was always ‘the puir laddie’ to Bella. She mothered him, and ordered him about and it was good to see her have her way with him. It was also good to see the Herr’s perfect manners with her; he might have been talking to the greatest lady in the land.

Bella would stand over him. “Tak’ this like a guid laddie.”

“I don’t really want anything, thanks, Bella.”

“No want anything, indeed, and you wi’oot yer denner and yer tea! Ye’ll tak’ this and no ma’ so muckle noise aboot it.”

And the Herr would take the cup of tea that only Bella had had the foresight to prepare for him. She watched over him like a broody hen, and rarely did he escape her ministrations.

Bella was invaluable to us. No one did more, no one worked harder to make our shows a success. Without Bella—and the Herr—two strangely contrasting types, we could not have done as we did. We could never even have dared the attempt.

Bella saw to the costumes; the Herr would plan them out, and to Bella and her assistants fell the

Herculean task of interpreting his desires. For days they would snip-snip away; we would be dragged from our painting of scenery to try on a pirate's costume, or the airy garments of an elf, or perhaps even the hide of a dinosaur!

Safety-pinned all over, Bella had us in her grasp and we will never forget her "Stan' still, laddie, will ye no'", as she rammed still more pins into us.

And when it was all over Bella's sigh of relief and "Eh, laddie, wasna it grand?", found echo in the hearts of many of us.

Perchance Bella may enter into this article again. There were few of our activities in which she did not have some part. She is old now and cannot work as she used to do, but I think she must often look at the Thanks Badge we gave her, and cast her wonderful memory back over the good old days. She was never happier than when among her "laddies."

Let this suffice for our yearly Concerts. It has been a long recital and it only remains to be said that, although we never augmented our funds to any great extent, we made sufficient to carry us on until each succeeding year.

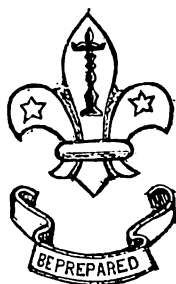


Reminiscences of A Scout.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERNATIONAL JAMBOREE.

1920.



Reminiscences of A Scout.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERNATIONAL JAMBOREE.

1920.

A year or so after the War the Laird kindly presented us with an Army hut from the old Camp. This we dismantled ourselves, and re-erected in the village.

Night after night we would visit the Camp, which still held a glamour for us, and busy ourselves prising off asbestos sheets from the walls, lifting malthoid from the roof, and so on. We found it great fun.

Close by was the tank once used for the Camp's water requirements. For years it had been an ugly land-mark from miles around, towering high above the trees. We delighted to climb to this tank, although

we were always relieved when we reached terra-firma again. There was a nasty moment at the top when our legs dangled over two hundred feet of space trying to find the topmost rung of the ladder! No matter how often we essayed the climb, the horrible sinking feeling of that uncertain moment never became less acute.

It was a relief to have our new Headquarters, but somehow it never proved the same as the old one, unsuitable though that had been. There were memories attached to our stone hut that were very precious; it had been our venue for six exciting years and had seen much of scouting lore.

We opened our new hut with a Mothers' Meeting, surely a strange gathering for a Scouts' Hall! We issued invitations to the parents and the relatives of the whole Troop, and were delighted when they turned up in force. Tea was provided, with the help of the ubiquitous Bella—indeed I think it was at this assembly that we presented her with our Thanks Badge—and after, a little talk on Scouting was given by the Herr, followed by songs and humorous items. The evening was a great success, and we felt we had handsomely 'hanselled' our new building.

I now turn to an epoch-marking occasion, not only in the history of our own Troop, but in that of practically every Troop in the Movement.....The International Scout Jamboree held in Olympia, London, in August, 1920. Earlier in this article I have described

my thoughts regarding this amazing concourse of Scouts, but now I wish to give the actual experience of our own little Troop.

Whenever the subject of a Jamboree was mooted, we determined to take part in it, and straightaway we began the never-ending fight for funds. We held an enormous Jumble Sale in one of our village halls, and to our relief we cleared a substantial sum. Several subscriptions were also forthcoming, and in the long run we reached the necessary figure.

We had one ambition—to go as kilted Scouts. Hitherto we had worn the regulation khaki shirt and shorts, but now we determined to adopt the kilt for all dress occasions. We purchased surplus Government stock, and after much scrimping and scraping, we paraded in our beloved Scottish national dress.

Our Commissioner—the Herr—was on the Executive Council of the Jamboree, and already busy in London with the necessary work of organisation, but he wrote to us that he wished the Troop to run an Exhibition Stall in the Olympia Annex.

We gasped, but the Herr would have it so. Handiwork, he suggested, and as no better idea was forthcoming, we set to to 'swot' up various items. We constructed toys out of cardboard, made little mechanical figures, useful knick-knacks for the house; we did

fret-work, basket-work and a dozen other such constructive crafts.

Then, to our stupefaction, we learned that our Stall was to be the only one run by a Scottish Troop. This news spread instant consternation in our ranks! Pride ourselves as we might on our little efficiencies, when it came to representing Scotland in a World-Wide Jamboree, we felt our *deficiencies* too keenly to be otherwise than aghast at the prospect.

But once again—the Herr desired that it should be so—Scotland must be represented, he said, and why not by his own little Troop? And by Jove, why not?, said we, and that was the end of that. Our fighting spirit was aroused—and weren't we glad that we had got our kilts!

So that we might arrange our Stall before the Jamboree opened, we decided to travel to London a week earlier than the main Scottish Detachment. The Herr promised to find us accommodation until the huge Camp at Richmond was ready.

What excitement—and what worries for the Scoutmaster!

My brother—now Scoutmaster—and myself—Senior Patrol Leader—were the only two in the Troop who had visited London prior to this date, so the eagerness with which everyone anticipated the visit can be imagined.

From the very outset we found a mascot—Wee Mac. During the whole period of the Jamboree Wee Mac not only became the centre of amusement of our Troop, but of half Olympia. He became more or less an International celebrity.

Wee Mac was small and round, his face was full and fresh. His smile was one of perplexed innocence, and when he looked up into one's eyes and said appreciatively, or surprisedly, "Oh, *Sirrs!*", it was difficult to keep from smiling broadly oneself.

Wee Mac had a good deal of the *gamin* in him; a properly cheeky little brat, with an accent that even we hardened Scots could only understand with difficulty. But he was a good lad, and developed into a splendid Scout. He was a born actor; unconsciously he would adopt attitudes that served the better to set off his whimsicalities.

He started to amuse us on the railway platform, while we waited for the London train. Our parents had come to see us off, and the platform bore a festive appearance. We were all excited. Then Wee Mac rushed up.

"Please, sir, ma belt's burst!"

A kilt on many occasions can be a dangerous dress, but to attempt to wear one without sufficient support is courting calamity, and Mac's face was

piteous in the extreme. He "couldna gang among they Lunnon folks a'huddin' his kilt up a' the while.'

So the station-master's wife, Mac's mother and mine got busy, and there on the platform they did as best they could to spare Mac the necessity for any alarm.

Arrived at London, the traffic problem was too much for Mac. The order would be given to cross some busy street, and we would await our opportunity. The other side safely reached, we would count our numbers, only to discover Wee Mac still stationary on the pavement we had just left, or else frantically scrambling for an 'island', with 'bus and car brakes screeching all around him'!

Perhaps his greatest *gaffe* was when we took the whole Troop to one of the larger restaurants—the Corner House, I think it was.

On return to Camp Mac was asked where he had been.

"Oh, we were at y'in o' they grand restarongs; a la carte it was ca'ed."!

The morning after our arrival we reported at Olympia, already a hive of industry. We sought out the Herr, and practically the first remark he made to us was, "B. P. is calling for Orderlies. I want two of you to volunteer." This two of us did with promptitude, and five minutes after first entering Olympia I stood face to face with the Chief Scout.

“Reported for Orderly Duty, sir.”

“Splendid. I have plenty of work for you. To begin with, please take this message to Headquarters in Buckingham Palace Road, and bring me back an answer.”

I took the letter, and saluting, turned away—but I wonder if any Scout ever felt so miserable!

Here was I but newly arrived in London, my last visit to it so long ago that my recollections were of the haziest. “Take this to Buckingham Palace Road”, when the second I set foot outside Olympia I was completely and hopelessly lost!

I will never forget the misery of that moment. However, I had been given a job by the Chief himself and that job just *had* to be done. So off I set.

Fortunately the Jamboree had been extensively advertised, and there must have been few Londoners who did not know something concerning it. Considerable interest had been aroused in the number of nations to be represented, and Scouts were popular figures in the City.

So when I commenced asking this person and that the way to Buckingham Palace Road I met with nothing but kind and friendly help. A kilt has a tremendous fascination for a Londoner, and heads turned wherever I went.

It was a strange and terrifying journey. I caught buses only to find they were going the wrong way. I lost myself in the Green Park and was rescued by a frock-coated gentleman who was on his way to unveil a statue of Abraham Lincoln. It was with a thrill I passed before Buckingham Palace and narrowly prevented myself from saluting the sentries!

Scout Headquarters at last! How delighted I was to be inside the famous office that was so well known to every Scout. I came in for a barrage of questions, being the first young Scot to have business with Headquarters.

My return journey was more quickly accomplished, but it was with dread I searched for B. P. I had been gone for hours—or so it seemed!

The Chief asked why I had been so long, and on hearing my rather hesitating answer—he smiled! All was well!

I had many other duties to perform as Orderly; in the course of them becoming acquainted with many of the more famous personalities in the Movement, and also gaining an insight into the stupendous undertaking of the Jamboree. I also saw much of our beloved Chief, and this was the greatest joy of all.

It is impossible for me to describe adequately the experiences of the ensuing fortnight. Incident

followed so hard upon incident that we could scarcely take in all that happened before us.

Writing, as I am, after the Arrowe Head Park Jamboree of 1929, my tale must suffer by comparison with this wonderful achievement, but there is a delight, a freshness and a wonder about the initial effort in any great undertaking that is never felt to the same degree in subsequent repetitions, and I must blame my unflagging enthusiasm for the 1920 Jamboree on this delight and freshness.

Should my figures seem unimpressive after Birkenhead, remember that I write of the first Jamboree ever held.

When we moved into Old Deer Park, Richmond—but a very short distance from the Thames—we found that twenty-two nations were represented in the Camp. This being the first occasion on which any of us had seen so many nationalities grouped together, we were more than interested in our companions.

Strange friendships were quickly made, and it was common to see half a dozen lads swinging along arm in arm, none of them understanding a single word of the language of his fellows.

The Camp was excellently laid out, with each nation having its own lines. It was so immense that many a time we had difficulty in finding our own tent.

From the number of heads that popped in and hurriedly popped out of our tent door, it was obvious that others besides ourselves were experiencing the same bewilderment !

During one spell I was on duty at night doing Police work, patrolling a certain section of the Camp to see that nothing untoward was happening. After "Lights Out" had blown, it was my duty to see that all tents were darkened, and I had many amusing encounters with foreign Scouts.

When my "Lights Out, please", met with a blank stare, I was reduced to pantomimic gestures to persuade the tent inmates that my intentions were honourable and must be obeyed. I became weary of pointing at lamps and candles and puffing my cheeks out as I pretended to blow!

Our friends the Americans had large ideas as usual. None, or very few of them, wore shorts, but paraded in rather slack looking breeches with khaki coats. It was rare to see them with their sleeves rolled up. They were mostly older lads and paraded the Camp smoking, until the Commandant issued a timely word of advice.

The Americans had come over intent upon carrying off every Competition they were eligible for; a laudable enough determination in its way, if only approached in the right spirit. But the Americans did

not do so well as they were fully convinced they would, and when Competition after Competition was wrested from them, they allowed their chagrin to become too obvious.

The climax came when Scotland won a tug-of-war final that America already had counted as hers. Feeling ran high, and it was rumoured that the Scottish Lines were to be raided that night, and tents let down upon the sleepers.

We were all prepared. Those of us who were on duty were keyed up to give an early alarm. Scotland was ready, and—truth to be told—keenly anticipating the fun; but wiser counsels had evidently prevailed and the night passed quietly.

The Camp routine was strict, but so well adhered to that it was made easy.

We were up betimes—the early Scout caught the ablution-benches empty, and it was the lazy worm that got the bird—to parody a popular saying! Any Scout who showed reluctance to get up was eagerly swooped on, bundled into a blanket and tossed in the air until all sleep was out of him.

Tent and kit inspections were held daily; marks were awarded for the cleanest and neatest tent. I regret to say that on the last day of the Camp the eagle eye of the Scottish Commandant discovered a broken

match-stick half buried in our tent—and we lost the prize.

Meals were served in numerous canteens scattered over the Camp, and being young and ravenous we had many complaints to make. The catering had been given to a London firm and must have been a colossal undertaking, but we never bothered about that. We only knew that our tea was cold and invariably tasted of iodoform!

I shall never forget our last sight of Old Deer Park, Richmond. The whole Scottish Contingent was marching from the Camp, en route for Euston Station. Our pipe bands were playing, the music swirling along the lines; every Troop carrying its County flags; kilts swinging in perfect time. We were showing the Camp just why Scotland stands where she does.

The head of the column swung past one of the huge catering marquees; the Staff were standing outside to see us march off. High above the wail of the pipes a voice chanted ;

“Oh.....*who* washed his feet in the tea? Oh
.....who washed his feet in the tea?”

The whole Contingent took it up, and as we turned out of the Camp gates bound for Bonny Scotland, we felt we had got our own back on the caterers!

It was also somewhat disconcerting to watch huge tubs of kippers being brought in, the fish lifted by

their tails and dropped carelessly on the plates all down the tables. It was not uncommon to have a conversation with one's neighbour interrupted by a kipper flying past an inch from one's face, bound for a plate further down the line !

However, we had few meals in the Camp, and fully made up for any shortage when we sampled the excellent catering arrangements in Olympia.

Immediately breakfast was over we set off for Olympia . I would mention here that our little Troop was in a peculiarly enviable position. Being the only stallholders in the Contingent, we, of necessity, were exempted from the usual routine of the Camp. We attended no mass Camp Parades—at least, we attended only when we had time and inclination ; we had passes that enabled us to leave or enter the Camp at any time, and we were subjected to none of the regulations that might, or might not, have proved irksome, and to which the rest of the Contingent had to conform .

This proved a bone of contention between the Commandant and our S. M. but we carried the day. To help as far as was possible, we took out turn in sentry and orderly duty.

Being daily engaged in Olympia and exempted from Camp routine in this manner, we missed many interesting functions held in the Camp and in Richmond. There were special "Tamasha" days when dinners were

held; when the townsfolk of Richmond were entertained to an impromptu Concert; and when the Chief Scout held 'investitures' and paid special visits to the lines. We missed much—we even missed being included in the group photo of the Scottish Contingent,—(a sad blow, this!)—but we would not have foregone our Stall for anything. We were the envied of all.

We had arrived a week before the others and had helped to make Olympia ready. We had been behind the scenes, and, as we carefully explained to all envious listeners, we had been hob-nobbing with the whole "who's who" of the Scouting World !

We were privileged pass-holders in the Camp; we could enter the Olympia arena whenever we wished to witness any of the displays, and we were relieved from continual parades and from being with the mob. We gloried in our independence. And then, perhaps greatest delight and source of pride of all, was the fact that we had a special mention in "The Times" as being the only Scottish Troop to be running a Stall !

We did, however, take part in several amazing gatherings with the rest of the Camp. Three stand out as being pre-eminent, and strangely enough all have to do with religious services.

There was our Sunday in Old Deer Park when the Commandant—the Rev. Everard Digby—addressed the whole Camp.

We were drawn up—over 5000 of us—in three sides of a square. To any student of psychology the gathering must have been one of supreme interest. Boys of twenty-two nations, of countless denominations and creeds, listening, not to a sermon, but to a talk on things that lay before us.

The Rev. Everard was a difficult personality. It scarcely can be said that he was a popular Commandant, but he excelled on this one occasion.

We also accompanied the Scottish Contingent to a Special Service held in the Scot's Kirk, St. Columba's in Pont Street.

We marched through the City on a perfect summer's day with our bands playing and the swirl of the kilt bringing back many a remembrance of other and sterner times.

The famous old Church was hung with our flags, and at the foot of the Sacrament table was the King's Flag, which the Chief had presented to Scotland the evening before. And the famous old divine, Dr. Archie Fleming, preached to us as only he could, and there, with the sun filtering through the open windows and the subdued rush of the traffic outside, there with our flags before us and our faith in our hearts, we gained another memory that will never leave us.

After the service, we gathered in the Church

Hall, and "Archie Fleemin", as he is known to many Scotsmen, greeted us again, and he and his congregation entertained us to tea with that hospitality which is so wholly and so unmistakably Scottish.

If asked to state the most impressive scene of the Jamboree I would unhesitatingly say, Sunday, August 1st. when the Archbishop of York (now the Archbishop of Canterbury) addressed over sixteen thousand people.

The arena was filled with 3000 Scouts, Standard Bearers forming a line occupying the whole length of the arena.

Five thousand other Scouts and seven thousand of the public filled every available seat in the stadium. We were fortunate in having a stance in the arena so near the raised dais that every word was heard and every movement of the speakers noted. The Order of Service was printed so that all could follow.

I wish to quote the final part of the Archbishop's address, which, was delivered to an audience so quiet that the speaker's voice carried from end to end of that huge building. It emphasises what I had to say at the beginning of this part of my Reminiscences, that Scouting was now something that had gripped the world and that held an immense power in its keeping.

The Archbishop concluded his address as follows ; -

“You are alive, tingling with life; young, free and strong. Yours are the days to be. It is meet and proper that each one of you should be proud of his own Troop, and that you should strive to make it the best in the Movement. I am speaking to one of the biggest assemblies of boys that has ever met together in history. I am almost awed by the huge power of the boys assembled here.

How is such a solemn trust as is implied in this Movement to be used? There is only one answer—to make a new and better world. You are out, not to claim rights, but to do your duty; not to care for yourselves but for others; not to work for the class but for the commonwealth; not to suspect and fight the nations, but to make comrades and brothers.

I can understand the feelings of the Chief Scout as he surveys the wonderful expansion of the Movement which thirteen years ago was hardly thought of. If the Scout spirit were to lay hold of the nations of the world I believe its face would be changed.

When you go back to your homes, some of them across the seas, you must labour in harmony with your brother Scouts of all nations to form a band of brothers, all working strenuously with one magnificent goal in view—the peace among the nations of the world.

You can and will do it. You are now a great power which can make for that peace. I exhort you to

take this as your aim—the bringing into existence of the peace of the world.

This is my message to you, Boy Scouts——Keep the Trust !”

Although there must have been present hundreds of Scouts who did not understand a word of the Archbishop’s address the meaning of his words seemed to penetrate to everyone’s heart. The silence was so tense that it hurt.

The Chief Scout—our beloved B. P.—spoke a few words. He asked for a Two Minutes’ Silence in remembrance of those Scouts who had gone before

Sixteen thousand people stood with heads bent in one of the most impressive memorials that has ever been accorded to man; youth paying its tribute to youth. Silence, infinite and utter.

“SCOUTS! HOLD UP YOUR HEADS! LOOK WIDE!”

The Chief’s sharp command rang through the arena like a pistol-shot. The rustle of movement filled Olympia like a mighty wind.

There is not a Scout who bowed his head that Sunday who will ever forget that “Scouts! Hold up your heads! Look wide!” They were inspired words from one whose life was itself an inspiration to every Scout.

So ended a thrilling Service.

I fear my recollections of the Jamboree are taking up mere space than is proper, but, being the biggest event in Scouting up to that date, I feel an extensive report may not come amiss.

Our actual work in our Stall was not arduous. We were busy at intervals, and in shifts, at our various crafts, but for hours during the day we were free to amuse ourselves, ranging over the vast building.

We had one amusing little scene on the opening day.

H. R. H. The Duke of Connaught, accompanied by Princess Mary, was paying an Official Royal Visit to Olympia. We were keyed up and hard at work when the Duke passed with his party, stopping at every Stall to say a word.

Some time later, when we had relaxed somewhat, two Girl Guide officers strolled along and were greatly intrigued by some of our working models. They asked several questions and were given smiling answers. Our S. M. turned to us after they had passed on, and said, "Dashed good-looking girl that!" not realising that the lady in question was Princess Mary! His agony when he knew was acute. He went over all the things he had said, wondering if they were all in order.

We rarely saw the Herr; he was one of Lord Hampton's right hand men in the controlling and organising of the whole Jamboree, and he seemed to have time neither for food or sleep.

He insisted upon wearing the kilt...no dress could have accentuated more his extreme thinness, but his spirit was unquenchable. Before long it was one of the urgent questions of the day, one heard it asked on every side, "I say, who on earth is the lanky Commissioner in the kilt?"

As usual, everyone laughed at him; he was caricatured on innumerable occasions; in the "Things We Want To Know" column of the the "Daily Scout" (published and printed by Scouts inside Olympia) there were many hits at the Herr—but, as always, he proved the man for the job, and there were few Troops that did not take away with them some memory of "the lanky Commissioner in the kilt."

The Herr made his mark, and from the Jamboree on, he was recognised as one of the mainsprings of the Scout Movement.

It is impossible to give any description of the various daily doings in the arena. Every day the programme altered, and every day Olympia was crowded to the doors. The Jamboree met with a support from the public that was never anticipated. The enthusiasm of the spectators was incredible and did much to make things go with a swing.

Displays were given by every nation—Scotland winning the Shield for the most spectacular staged

during the Jamboree—and every department of Scoutcraft was dealt with; sport and other competitions were international.

The Wolf Cubs with their Howl gave one of the most thrilling exhibitions it was possible to witness.

Imagine it:—

The arena is empty; bare save for a small rock in the centre.

A tiny Cub strolls in, hands in pockets, looking lonely and forlorn in that great space. He glances round for playmates but there are none. He feels this isn't much of a game, so he whistles to discover if there are any pals within earshot.

There are! Hundreds of them answer from every direction; shouting and yelling they rush into the arena. It looks as if the muddle-up will be indescribable; there is not a single officer to control them.

But soon it is noticed that they are forming a huge circle two deep round the rock on which stands the first lone Cub. In thirty seconds every Cub is in his place, silent, still.

The lone Cub lifts his hand, the five hundred squat down; the hand drops, and from five hundred throats there issues a howl that lifts the roof!

How they loved it, these Cubs; and how astonishing was their discipline. A splendid augury for the future of Scouting.

Interspersed with our days in Olympia were evenings when we visited friends in London. My brother and myself were kindly invited to dinner by the Laird and his wife, then in residence in their town house; and we received many other invitations, official and unofficial, to various functions and parties.

Major Pullar, the Perth Commissioner, took the officers of the Scottish Contingent to "Chu Chin Chow", and the Laird sent our Troop tickets for another popular play.

Being free from ordinary Camp routine we were able to take our boys about London, and we 'did' the sights fairly thoroughly. On those occasions Wee Mac was invariably the life of the party. His ingenuous remarks and his broad accent amused everyone within hearing.

I remember Mac at the Zoo. He evinced great interest in an elephant and stood making faces at it. The elephant, not to be outdone, sneezed violently, and Mac came rushing after some of us who had walked ahead.

"Hi, sirrs, the elephant's droon't me!"

After his resuscitation he returned to have another look. He came to us with his face wreathed in smiles.

"Sirrs, it's lauchin'!" The elephant and he evidently had made it up!

I think I now must end this memorable Jamboree with two closing scenes.

Busy as we were, we were fortunate enough to glimpse part of the proceedings on both occasions, and in common with every other Scout present, we lost ourselves in an overwhelming, joyous enthusiasm. I would be surprised if there was a Scout left that week-end without a sore throat. The cheering we did would have affected lungs of leather.

On the Friday, the second last day of the Jamboree, B. P. was made Chief Scout of all the World; What a title.....Chief Scout of all the World! The leader of a Movement totalling millions, embracing every nation and every creed. The ideal of the visionary come to pass.

When the great International Jamboree was all but over, the Chief Scout entered the arena to receive the highest honour his Scouts could accord him. Wonderful B. P., he must have realised the absolute affection his boys had for him, the perfect trust.

He spoke to us, and gave to every nation the Grand Charter of the Movement. When he had ended we passed before him, and the nations hailed him and claimed him as their own.

Later on, during the Tribal Display, he entered the Camp Fire circle, accepted the Pipe of Peace, and blew smoke to the four winds. He was invested with

a Chieftain's feathers, and when the day ended B. P. was Chief Scout of All the World.

Saturday was a day of farewells. In the Camp it was spent in exchanging souvenirs with all our friends from abroad. We were amused and embarrassed by the Jamaicans, one of the most popular Contingents in the Camp. Our kilts attracted them immensely, and they besieged us with requests to exchange them for anything of theirs we wished.

When we were unable to accede to this request they entreated us to give them at least some portion of our kilts, so we all snipped little squares from the fold-over, and when the Jamaicans left for their far country, they did so with little squares of tartan sewn on the side of their hats! They were splendid lads with a fine Scouting spirit.

In Olympia the Jamboree moved to its ending... and what an ending it was! The pageantry in the arena was more impressive than ever before, and when the standard bearers formed round the Chief, and he turned to face the immense gathering, not a seat was vacant, and all official records for Olympia were easily broken.

The silence was so perfect that the Chief's words carried to the farthest corners of the building.

He spoke to his Scouts:—,

“Brother Scouts, I ask you to make a solemn choice. Differences exist between the peoples of the

world in thought and sentiment, just as they do in language and physique.

The War has taught us that if one nation tries to impose its particular will upon others, cruel reaction is bound to follow. The Jamboree has taught us that if we exercise mutual forbearance and give and take, then there is sympathy and harmony.

If it be your will, let us go forth from here fully determined that we will develop among ourselves and our boys that comradeship, through the world-wide spirit of the Scout Brotherhood, so that we may help to develop peace and happiness in the world and goodwill among men.

Brother Scouts, answer me. Will you join in this endeavour?"

There was a moment's silence, then every voice spoke as one....."YES!"

The Chief looked slowly round the crowded arena, "God speed you in your work and fare you well."

The Last Post sounded, flags dipped and everyone stood silent. These last minutes were trying ones, sad ones. The whole endeavour, the whole meaning, the whole ideal of the Jamboree were summed up in them. Take with us the memory of those last few minutes and we took with us the heaven that would work in us for many a year to come.

A band struck up "Auld Lang Syne", and Scouts and audience linked up with a will.

But in the centre of the arena stood one little figure—alone—and lonely. The Chief! Was he to be missed out? No! He dived into the front rank and linked up with the rest, while the cheering echoed in waves from the high walls of the building.

He escaped to the Royal Box, but we called for him and he came down among us again. There was a rush towards him and he was hoisted high on powerful shoulders.

Rushing, pushing, scrambling, well-nigh fighting, all strove to gain the front, cheering madly, waving hats and flags and scarves. There was danger for some time that the Chief would be crushed in the throng, but strong hands bore him to the side and he was hoisted to the seats. Even the iron stanchions round the arena were bent by the pressure of the crowd. The Chief was helped from seat to seat by the spectators, who were as wildly excited as the Scouts, and at last regaining the Royal Box, he waved "Farewell" to us, breathless but beaming.

The cheering broke out again madly, and for twenty minutes the arena was a scene of pandemonium.

Then gradually the various Troops dipped their colours and marched away. The arena slowly emptied.

The Jamboree was over.

————:O:————



Reminiscences of A Boy Scout.

CHAPTER V.

OUR ISLAND CAMPS.



The Reminiscences of A Scout.

CHAPTER V.

OUR ISLAND CAMPS.

As a result of the Jamboree, Scouting received an immense impetus and encouragement. All over the country new Troops were formed, Training Camps established and local Rallies and Displays organised. The public were interested, and more funds were donated than ever before.

No sooner was the 1920 Jamboree over than arrangements were put in hand for another one to be held in Amsterdam in a year or two. The International aspect of Scouting was kept alive and fostered by numerous visits of British Scouts to the Continent. We, in turn, entertained Troops from Italy, France, Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

In succeeding years these visits have become so general that large Holiday Camps are held in various parts of the Continent and the British Isles, where

Competitions in Scoutercraft and Sports are arranged between the visiting Troops and their hosts.

Scouting had come to stay.

With us the years were busy ones as usual. Our Troop became so large that it had to be subdivided, and before I left the district in 1923 there were the original Troop—the First (Island), the Second (Church) Troop and the Third (M.....) Troop. Besides these, the older lads who had reached the age limit formed a Rover Troop, and this, after various vicissitudes of fortune, survives to this day.

Wolf Cubs were inaugurated but did not prove a success, as we were unable to find a competent Cub-Master or Mistress.

I undertook several roving commissions about this time. When the Second (Church) Troop was formed, the members knew little or nothing concerning Scout theory or practice, so I was 'loaned' to this Troop for a period, to help them and instruct them.

We 'met' in the church Hall, and although in many districts church Troops have proved successful and thriving organisations, I could not help feeling that this new Troop was hindered in its progress by its too close connection with things ecclesiastical.

Girl Guides were also started in the village and immediately became popular. But again the lack of

trained officers made advancement difficult; so certain of us assisted for a time as Instructors in work common to both Movements.

When the Guides were fully established we still coached and examined them in Signalling, Ambulance and other tests; while the Guide Officers visited our Camps and Headquarters to study for themselves the multitudinous methods we had evolved throughout our long years of experience.

From now on the Scouts and Guides worked separately but in harmony. We interested ourselves in each others' displays, concerts, etc. We held Mass Parades and associated in any local events.

When the Third (M.....) Troop was organised in a village a mile distant, I took over the Scout-Mastership.

Our first Headquarters was the top storey of a huge disused mill, and proved a splendid place, except that we were unable to make any impression on its vastness by way of decoration. Indoor sports of all descriptions—even to cycle events—were possible and very popular.

When it became necessary to vacate this building, our next Headquarters was so small that little could be done in it, and when I resigned from the Troop, representations were being made in an effort to secure a more suitable hut.

This Troop was composed of very junior lads, and its progress was variable. Outdoor training was eagerly practised; and many exciting paperchases and 'fights' in the near-by pine woods were held. Equipment was practically nil, and for all Camps and Displays the three County Troops combined so as to eke out what tents, and so on, there were.

There now remains but one last part of my Scout Reminiscences to describe. I have left it to the end, despite slight chronological inexactitude, as the memory of it will live far longer than that of any other experience.

If asked to state the greatest joy in all my Scouting life, without hesitation I would say—our Island Camps. They meant more to me—and I think, to all others—than anything else, and from them we have carried away what little Scoutcraft, what little of the Scout Spirit is ours to this day.

As an introduction to these long and rambling Reminiscences I expressed the hope that they might enable old Scouts to live again some of the precious days of their youth.....if any can recall such days as we spent in our Island Camps, then are they lucky indeed.

Lying close to our village is one of those Lochs for which Scotland is famed; hills sloping down to it all round, numerous burns running into it, wild birds

in thousands resting around its shores. This Loch belonged to the 'Laird', and was a beloved possession in the eyes of the Herr. The Loch to the Herr was Home; it exerted its misty fascination over everyone, but over him most of all. To-day he lies facing it, the cold winds of winter and the cool breezes of summer blow from it over his grave. The gulls and the terns wheel and cry over the last resting-place of one who understood them.

From the date of the Herr's first interest in us, the Loch became one of the largest factors in our Scouting.

In the beginning, the Herr taught us rowing and sailing, and we made countless expeditions to the various islands and river mouths. The islands were so historical as to be mentioned in the history books of the nation, and with the Herr, who knew every stone and every blade of grass, we explored excitedly, and clothed the old, and hither-to dry-as-dust, in the lively garments of our interested imagination.

The Loch began to mean much to us; we were accorded the privilege of a boat upon it whenever we wished, and many perfect days we spent sailing or sculling, picnicing wherever fancy led us, and returning only when the moonlight showed as a silver path across the water.

Then came the wonderful idea...to utilise one of the islands as our annual Camping Ground. The Laird

was approached and found willing. The great adventure was at hand.

For the last ten years we had been camping all over the county. Wherever there was a good pitch, there were we. Some of our Camps will never be forgotten ; we camped beside burns, on hill-sides, in green glens, on moorland, by loch-side. Realising that a camp brings out the man in a boy more than anything else, we made Camping the main part of our Scout Training.

Get a lad under canvas and it is easy to inculcate discipline, hardihood, service, usefulness. It is also easy to approach nature, and through nature to bring the lad to appreciate the world; take an interest in animals and birds, the stars, weather, God. A camp is the ideal training ground of Youth.

And in Our Island we found the perfect site.

Imagine it :—,

On the far side of the Loch from the village, the hills run down to within a very short distance of the water's edge; only a field or two lie between the Loch and their lower slopes. In many parts the tree and the rushes grow right down to the water; there is only an occasional farm-stead, only a cart-road or a field-path. Curlew and sand-piper, seagull and plover are the restless inhabitants of the shore. Here and there little sandy beaches, little inlets, gleam golden in the sun.

Near to the mainland, so near that the shadows of the hills in the water almost reach it, so near that in a hot summer one can wade from it to the mainland, lies Our Island.

It is no small place quickly explored and finished with; for over a hundred acres it lies long and low, so low that from a little distance it is scarcely discernible.

Approaching it by boat from the village—a four mile row—it gradually shows green against the far shore; its one slight elevation forming a focus point for our eyes. Not a tree is to be seen on it, only a few stunted shrubs.

As we row nearer a faint wild cry comes to us and we thrill to our very depths—it is the Call of Our Island,...the call we since have heard the world over, but never heard so keenly as when nearing this lone island. It gradually becomes more and more insistent, more querulous; it is a cry that suits the scene, the loneliness, the water and the hills...the cry of seagulls and terns protesting in their thousands against the violation of their island sanctuary.

As the boat turns the out-jutting promontory and moves slowly alongside the stony shore, gulls and terns fly in myriads overhead, dipping and wheeling, flashing a foot above us, and always they utter their plaintive, desolate cry.

Year by year this cry became more and more precious to us. As we bent to our oars we would listen for it; when we heard it faintly ahead our faces would light up—Our Island was welcoming us back.

“Here, on the cliff, to the sea their lover
The swift gulls wheel, and dip like a dream;
Sunlit all day, they hang and hover,
Beautiful lovers, proud-winged, a-gleam.”

Wherever I am, does a gull fly overhead, crying in its passing, I have but to shut my eyes to be back on the Loch, the soft slap of the waves hitting upon the boat's prow, the green of Our Island coming up ahead. It is a memory of the wild; one of those occasional glimpses of Nature that are vouchsafed to us, and which bring us nearer to the throbbing heart of Mother Earth.

Our boat moves for a mile between the hills and the island before we turn another promontory, and there ahead of us lies a little bay, safe from the winds and the angry waters. We bend to our oars, our strokes quicken as our helmsman urges us on. With a shout we give the last fierce pull, there is a crash as the boat grounds on the sand and shoots up the beach. We jump out and pull it well up. We are back on Our Island at last.

In days so old that it is difficult to imagine them, a migrating band of Culdees came from Ireland and

after various pilgrimages and travels founded a monastery on what I now call Our Island. There they lived and died, the seagulls no doubt 'keening' them, and the winds of the centuries sweeping over their graves. Years passed and the monastery still existed. In course, there came to it a youth to serve his novitiate; this accomplished, he set out on pilgrimage, and after some time spent in wandering from place to place, he came to rest near the banks of the river now called Clyde, and in time, he became the founder of Glasgow.

But, while Glasgow grew, the old monastery on the island fell upon evil days. Possibly it was raided; it may have been that storms swept over it and decided the monks against continuing to live in such a desolate spot. Whatever the reason, the monastery was deserted and gradually...gradually...fell into ruin.

And now—centuries later—as we turn from our boat on the beach, it is to the ruins of the monastery we make our way. It stands on the highest point of the island, a knoll possibly fifty or sixty feet above sea-level, exposed in every direction.

Time has not treated it kindly. In recurrent efforts towards preservation a corrugated iron roof has been placed upon it, crumbling walls have been half-erected and plastered; some unthinking person has placed an anachronistic flagstaff against it! It looks for all the world like an old stone hut—which is all it

is. Inside, the gamekeepers have been accustomed to store wood for butts, a few tools, wirenetting and so on.

But to youth it is easy to reconstruct, even from the dullest material, and we take charge of the monastery with hearts that thrill despite ourselves. At a little distance, perhaps ten or fifteen yards away—lie a number of grass-covered mounds in more or less regular line. In later days we pass pleasant and exciting hours in excavation, and gradually scenes come to life before our eyes. Here were the dark cloisters where the monks walked in meditation; here the fish-pond; over there the kitchen. We can follow it all. We even find the rough stone-paved floors and broken earthenware.

As far as we know, from that far day to this we are the first inhabitants of this lonely spot. When bedtime comes, when slung side by side in hammocks in the old monastery; with lamps casting weird shadows on the rough-hewn walls, we talk softly of the old monks lying buried beneath us. How did they fill in their days; of what were their thoughts? Did the reflection of the hills in the water stir them as it stirs us? From the days of the ancient Culdees to these of the young Scouts—it is a far cry; so far that we fall asleep thinking of it.

In the morning, before the sun has climbed the hills, we are awakened by the wild cries of the gulls

greeting the dawn. One or two of them land on the corrugated iron roof and we hear the patter of their claws.

We are up early—there is much to do this first day of camp. How wonderful a scene it is to open the hut door and step quietly out into the morning air.

The dew weighting the rough grass, so heavy that it lies like a white, glistening mantle; the sun peeping over the hills, lighting up the still Loch, the waters so peaceful, so unruffled that they lie like a huge mirror. Suddenly there is a splash as a fish jumps for his breakfast; the ripples die away in ever widening circles.

Looking towards the distant village we can see the mists creeping away before the sun, streaming up into the clearing air. It will be some time before we are able to discern the church spires and the white face of the "Steeple" Clock.

Almost at our feet rabbits scurry about in scores, leaving dark trails in the dewy grass. Others are sitting at the mouths of their burrows, industriously engaged in washing their faces or putting an extra twirl in their whiskers.

At the far end of the island where gulls nest in thousands, the air is dark with birds flying above their nests, fighting, dipping and wheeling in play or for the sheer joy of motion. A brace of duck shoot suddenly

before us, their wings whistling with the speed of their travel. They come to rest, splashing and squaking, on the glassy waters of the little bay. A curlew rises from the thick tufty grass and quests noisily along the shore, his cry strong and as lonely as that of the seagulls.

To some of our lads it is like seeing the face of God. They may have lived for years a hundred yards from the Loch and yet never realised it; but let them rise fresh in the morning and come forth to meet the day and their faces are flooded with awe. They cannot explain it or express it; they knew not the meaning of the feeling they have, but something within them is rising to meet the dawn; something within them is expanding; some part of their old self is being sloughed off.

It is more than a mere experience; it is an actual revolution within them. Not merely something that becomes a memory to be conjured up round camp-fires of the future, but a change in the whole outlook of their lives.

I have heard Camping decried as being mere pleasure and as not being sufficiently educational. Many parents look upon camps as a holiday for their boys.

True, a camp is a pleasure, and it can be a most exhilarating holiday, but if it does not prove to be vastly more than that, then the nature of the camper must be most unreceptive.

Some people regard education in the light of mathematics and the correct writing and speaking of the King's English. I would be the last to question these things as being educational assets of primary importance, but I would enter a plea for the things that one does not usually learn in school.

Self-control, unselfishness, everyday efficiency, the practice of health, the habit of thinking of life and creation, nature, the application of science going on around one, service to others: I could enumerate a hundred and one things that can be learned—not taught—in camp.

I can do no better than describe to you our daily life on Our Island. For five or six years we camped here annually, the main camp being for three weeks, but invariably the senior lads made a stay of longer than this.

Fatigues are drawn up and every Scout takes his turn, and knows exactly what is expected of him each day.

At about 5.30 the bugle goes, and four of us clamber rather unwillingly from our hammocks; the others merely turn over, thanking their stars it is not *their* turn to be early astir.

But once dressed there comes the unforgettable moment when we open the hut door and step outside into the young morning. It is then we think of the

sleepers behind us with scorn—if we think of them at all.

The dawn greets us :—,
“Look to this day,
For it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course lie all the
Vagaries and realities of your existence ;
The bliss of growth,
The glory of action,
The splendour of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream,
And to-morrow is only a vision,
But to-day well lived makes
Every yesterday a dream of happiness
And every to-morrow a vision of hope ”

Such is the salutation of the dawn !

Two of the four disappear round the rear of the hut towards the field kitchen; they are Cook's Orderlies, and it is their unpleasant task to get a fire going, to bring water to fill the dixies, to attend to the filter, and generally to help the Cook with the morning meal.

We leave them to it; as I have said, theirs is an unpleasant task. The wood will be damp, the smoke will curl about their eyes and the Cook will be sure to complain that nothing is right.

We turn away and race barefoot down to the little bay, our shoes slung round our neck, and our eyes

glued to the path to detect the thistles that prick the unwary. With a clatter—the sound lives in my memory to this day—we throw our oars and rudder into the boat, and with a mighty shove send it dancing into the water. In we jump, and before the first faint curl of smoke rises from behind the hut we are sculling over the glassy waters. There is a nip in the air; the shadow of the hills lies darkly across the water. The sun has not reached us yet, but looking back, we see sunlight creeping down the beach we have just left.

What are we doing afloat so early; where are we off to? The answer is really rather romantic; we are rowing to the mainland to exchange fish and game at a nearby farm, for milk and butter and eggs. We are marketing before three quarters of the world are out of their beds!

And don't we enjoy it! The sharp fifteen minutes' row until the boat grounds a hundred yards or more from the mainland; out goes the anchor, we jump overboard and wade ashore through the cold, clear water.....it is the stuff from which dreams are fashioned.

Once on dry land we are forced to don our shoes before we tackle the narrow path that runs through the struggling pinewood, over the rustic stile, across the meadow and into the farmyard. Here we find the dairy-maid busy with her cows, and our pitchers are filled to overflowing with warm, creaming milk.

The return journey to the boat is rather a strain. There are rabbits to throw stones at; we are certain a mallard has her nest in these thick rushes.....but we dare not stop. Even as we walk, we stumble over a moss-covered stone and the milk spills over the sides of our pitchers.

We wade gingerly out and place the pitchers on the thwarts, then for a few moments we rush to and from the shore collecting loose driftwood for the camp-fire.

We glance towards Our Island; blue smoke curls high above the monastery; there are signs of activity all around. We will have to be moving.

Our timing is accurately done. As we jump on-to the sandy bay the first "Cookhouse" rings out and there is a scurry for places down the long table.

"Hurry up with the milk."

"Come on, slowcoaches, the porridge is cold."

Such are the remarks that greet us from those who but lately have tumbled sleepy-eyed from their hammocks.

Our breakfast table is a fine sight. Placed outside so that the sunlight falls upon us, it runs practically the whole length of the monastery. Between twenty and thirty of us sit down to the meal. At the

head of the table is the Herr, as wild-looking a spectacle as can be imagined. Tall, thin body clothed in a white cricket shirt, a pair of grey shorts worn very long, and from under the shorts what we call his "frills," peeping over his knees. Round his neck he has a coloured silk handkerchief slung cowboy fashion, his hair is tousled and on end—it would be difficult for some of his friends to recognise in him the cultured product of society.

We group ourselves around him in any order; the bugler sounds the second "Cookhouse", and the Cook's Orderlies bear round the steaming dixie of porridge.

The Cook's face bears a look of anxiety; he eyes the Herr furtively.

The Herr, be it known, considers himself an authority on our fine Scottish dish of porridge. He has made it and tasted it in many countries; he can tell from the look of it if it is 'just right'. We are inclined to think him a trifle meticulous, a little pernickety. We have known him to condemn porridge that to us tasted like the food of the gods. It has been whispered, that, like many a lesser being, the Herr is tempted to criticise things according to the state of his digestion!

So is it that the Cook eyes the Herr and awaits the verdict. He thinks of everything he has done—remember he is only a lad of fifteen or so—the water boiling before the meal was put in, the pinch of salt,

not too much, not too little, the extra handful of meal thrown in five minutes before the bugle sounds—it is important this—yes, everything is in order.

The Herr lifts his spoon.

“Um-un-un. Yes,—yes, it will do. Might have been a little firmer.”

The Cook relaxes : all is well. An unqualified approval is beyond expectation, so the Herr’s “It will do.”, is sufficient to make any porridge and any cook’s reputation.

Porridge, eggs and bacon, omelettes, fish, toast, bread and butter, marmalade, apples, tea and coffee — most of our lads have never tasted such fare before and they do full justice to it.

These meals are delightful occasions. Here are we all gathered together in the sunshine of a summer’s morning, hills and Loch before us, wild birds crying above us. The long day lies ahead and we know it will be full of good things, things that a boy can enjoy to the very depths of him. And there is good companionship, merry jesting, interesting talks and discussions. No wonder our meals lengthen out well into the morning.

When at last some youngsters break from the table, we all disperse. Dishes must be washed immediately and all chores and fatigues done at once. When

one thinks of it beforehand, the washing of dishes, the scouring out of dixies, the collecting of firewood, the filling of filters, the cleaning out of the monastery and the usual kit-parade, all this sounds tedious and uninteresting, but it is surprising what good fun it can be.

Trooping down to the water's edge and balancing oneself on the stones set out into the bay, floating aluminium plates to one another, a little horseplay; then off roaming the island shores collecting driftwood, rousing rabbits, or narrowly avoiding tramping on a tiny gull or oyster-catcher—it is all part of our enjoyment.

Having put our house in order there is usually a bath parade. The seniors disappear and can be found situated in weird places, a little piece of broken glass or a small mirror set up in front of them, anxiously scraping their faces. The youngsters rub their soft, smooth chins and sigh enviously.

Then down to the boats in the bay which we use as towel racks, and from which we lean to reach deeper water for washing in. The Herr joins us, and it is always a mystery to me how he performs his toilet with a wristlet watch on and a pipe in his mouth. He will forsake neither, and it amuses us to see him skirting round his face trying to avoid the pipe!

The morning is now ours to do with more or less as we wish. It may be that at breakfast a programme has been drawn up. Not a programme with hard and fast conditions and timings attached, because youth

greatly dislikes to be tied down to certain hours and 'must-be-dones', but one that is elastic.

"Let us do this, and then perhaps it might be fun to go there. If we have time we might do something else." This is quite sufficient for any boy. Start him off and very quickly he finds his own amusements.

We may break up ; some of us wish to climb one of the near hills. So we make friends with the Cook, and soon we go off with haversacks packed tightly with sandwiches, a tin of something, fruit, tea.

A fine breeze is blowing, so hoisting sail we coast quickly over to the mainland.

Perhaps an hour later we look down from the fifteen hundred foot hill to the Camp lying away beneath us. We can see the Cook and his satellites already busy over the fire preparing lunch. Blankets move slightly in the wind as they air in the sunshine.

With a wave, in case anyone is looking for us through the Herr's telescope we strike inland : we wish to cross the moorland and reach a further peak. Beside some purling stream we build our fire, eat our sandwiches and throw orange peel at one another.

In half an hour there is hardly a trace to be seen of our having passed that way. The orange peel and paper are burned, the fire is earthed, everything else is buried. We are ready to be off again.

And when evening falls and it is time to return, we row over the still Loch. Lights twinkle from the farmsteads on the hill slopes behind us; and before, we see the glare of the camp-fire and the shadowy figures gathered around it. The night closes in as we reach the little bay.

One or two of our companions come down to greet us.

“Well, had a good time?,” they ask, and we who have climbed the hills and run carefree over the moorland: we who have been on the heights with the cold wind blowing from the not far distant sea, and who have had our hearts full of thoughts we could never translate, reply simply:—

“Yes, topping thanks. Great fun!”, and that is all

Or it may be that we all go bathing at a delicious spot along the north side of the island. Half of us race along the beach to where it widens out in a huge expanse of smooth sand, perhaps two or three hundred square yards in extent. The other half man the boats and scull them to the narrow channel that here separates the island from the mainland. The boats are to be used as diving ‘boards’, and generally to add to the fun of the game. In we go one after another, the water being about shoulder high and the bottom as smooth and as soft as could be wished for.

A perfect hour, this. We play water-polo : we run races on the sand and dive again into the water.

The Herr never joins us in these aquatic pleasures. We see his tall figure moving about the camp, altering this, straightening that, always busy.

The Cook wants fish for supper, so we have taken our lines with us. At this time of the day we wish for perch with worms. We row to where we know there is a bank shelving suddenly down to deep water, and here we drop our anchor. This matter of dropping anchor can be attended by calamitous circumstances...

'Steambile' was our youngest recruit; he earned his undignified sobriquet by reason of his habit of continually puffing and blowing like a grampus. One day someone said, "He's just like a steam-boiler", and from that day "Steambile" he became.

'Steambile' loved to throw out the anchor ; it was as much as he could do, and once it proved *too* much. We were approaching a perfect perch bed and had warned 'Steambile' to be ready; but the anchor ropes were kinked, and when we gave the shout "*Heave!*", there was no answering splash.

In his agitation at seeing the boat moving over the bed, 'Steambile' feverishly picked up anchor, ropes and everything else connected with it, and staggered to the prow. With a great heave he threw them all in,

but losing balance he fell in after them and went deep down among the astounded perch.

Fortunately we had a boat-hook handy, and 'Steambile' was ignominiously hauled to safety !

I think perch-fishing is a delightful occupation. We fasten our worm and let the line gently over the side with little lead sinkers attached to weight it. Down it goes until the estimated depth is reached, and then we fasten on a cork which bob, bobs in the water before our eyes.

There is then nothing to do but wait for the cork to disappear, and when this happy event occurs to strike quickly and haul up Mr. Perch, very bristling and indignant at being so rudely outwitted.

The boat swings slowly and gently; the water gleams and glistens, and the sun heats up the thwarts and the floorboards—it is all extremely pleasant. We let our legs dangle in the water, we hand round a bag of sweets purchased before the camp began with an eye to just such an occasion as this.

We go day-dreaming, and are suddenly roused by a loud yell.

"Strike, Mac, strike ! Your cork's under !", and we jerk our line and feel the tell-tale weight on the hook.

"*Up she comes* ", we cry, and over the side slips the first catch.

The fun becomes fast and furious; we can hardly bait our hooks quickly enough. Perch come tumbling into the boat in scores. A difficult fish to kill is the perch and an awkward fish to handle. He has a row of spikes and sharp scales on his back that can give a nasty gash.

The bottom of the boat fills with gasping, wriggling fish and every few seconds another joins the mass. We have to be careful of our bare legs, but every now and then we slip and crash down with a yell into the wet, slippery pile.

I have known four of us catch over sixty in an hour; I have known us sit for two hours and return with one—or two. But always the pleasure is the same; the slow rocking of the boat in the cool water, the sunshine and the friends beside us.

A bugle call echoes over the water.....it is time for us to return. Lunch is nearly ready: the morning is over.

Again we gather round the long table and there is much talk of the morning's adventures. There is a glow on every face, and appetites are so gargantuan that the Cook anxiously eyes his stores.

In the afternoon we again are free to follow our inclination.

With a friend I slip away along the shore to a stretch I know where the sand is smooth and fine. We

have plans for a wonderful castle with moats and battlements, and goodness knows what other ingenious defences.

We say nothing to the others. We are a little afraid of being laughed at; building castles in the sand sounds such a childish pastime.

How glorious it is! We feel ourselves bursting with life and energy. There are a hundred things we want to do; we wonder if there ever will be time enough in which to do them. August days are so perfect; the summer lies like a benediction over the land.

The smell of the rushes is over-powering as we stride through the deep beds; we jump over hillocky tufts and come upon little expanses of smooth, green grass like a perfect lawn. They look like fairy circles, and we talk about them as we walk on, stooping every now and then to pluck a handful of wild, scented thyme.

We come to our beach. It is over a mile from the monastery; we are quite hidden and can set about our nefarious task unabashed by the critical and amused eyes of others less youthful in mind than ourselves.

The drought has extended for so long that the Loch is low. The beach runs for nearly two miles, and from the last tuft of rank grass to the first tiny wavelet must be nearly half a mile.

On the water's edge birds are standing in thousands. On our approach they rise into the air, squawking and crying so loudly that we fear they will draw the attention of the camp.

Soon however, they settle again, forming a grey margin to the water line. Great grey-backed gulls, black-headed, common and herring gulls, terns, mallard, teal, pintail, heron, Canadian and common geese. swans, oystercatcher, curlew, sandpiper..... the numbers are legion.

Occasionally a great grey-back with a wing span of six feet, circles over us investigating. Unable to follow our game he swoops down, and the first we know is a rush of wings behind us. We duck our heads and the huge bird mounts sharply again, after being but a foot from us. I have known them knock a hat off as they swooped.

Our castle grows under the eyes of its proud architects. The sand is firm and ideally suited for the purpose. The courtyard encloses a pond, "to be stocked with fish against a possible siege", we say! Turrets spring up; a worthy battlement. We form a noble drawbridge from driftwood. The moat is the delight of our hearts; deep and still. Brave indeed must be the first to cross it.

When at last we stand erect—our pleasant task ended—we have constructed a castle that would bring delight to any youngster.

"I wish wee Jimmy was here", my fellow conspirator remarks, "he is good at mud pies, but this would beat the band with him."

There is a shout from some distance off; we see a line of a dozen lads plunging through the grass and reeds, brandishing sticks.

"A rabbit hunt", we cry, and are off to join it.

Our Island is riddled with rabbit holes, the whole place is one colossal warren. The rabbits are largely responsible for the island being unwooded. Efforts have been made on numerous occasions to plant trees, but after precariously putting forth shoots and little buds, the rabbits and the voles have eaten the roots and the birds have completed the destruction.

It is a pity this; trees are the one thing we want to make Our Island perfect. How good it would be if the monastery had trees around it, sheltering it, and if the moonlight struck through their branches upon the camp fire !

But there is nothing and

".....A house is lonely
That has no trees for company,
For when the sun goes down and there is only
The stars...no star is friendly like a tree !
For trees are gossips whispering windy stories;
Their movements have a comfortable sound."
The old monastery stands alone.

But it is for the Cook's pot we hunt the rabbits, not for any revenge for their depredations. So we string out in a semicircular line of beaters, and before long we 'start' a poor, bewildered bunny. Off he goes like the wind, a dozen sticks hurtling after him. If he is unlucky he drops with a broken back or neck; but if our sticks miss—as is usually the case—he lives to run another day.

Our bag is never large: three or four at the most, but the excitement of the chase is intense. Running over the rough, springy ground is no easy matter, and the rabbit holes and the gulls' nests do not make the going any simpler.

The long day is advancing; the sun is beginning to dip behind the village. There will be two hours of daylight yet, but there is a feeling that night approaches.

The hills are lit up in a glow that is marvellous to behold. Valleys that have been dark all day now stand revealed; there are a dozen gleams from the tiny streams and falls. The heather is not yet fully out, but already there is a presage of the glory that another month will bring.

The harsher outlines soften; the ferns are green as a lush meadow; the rocks are brown and warm.

At the foot of the hills the white cottages stand out against their green background, their windows

reflecting the sunlight. Faint smoke rises from the peat fires in the tiny kitchens and we know that many a labourer soon will be taking his rest.

Stretching from the lower houses to the Loch side, lie the harvest fields; the corn ripe in the golden sunlight. Soon the reaper will come and swath by swath the golden harvest will fall. But now it nods gently—the ripe heads nod to the sun.

We have time for one last bathe before supper. The water is soft and cool as the shadows lengthen. We lie revelling, tired but very content.

As we walk back to the monastery we see the dark figures of the Cook and his satellites moving before the fire. We can almost smell our evening meal.

We are hungry as hunters home from the hills and sailors home from sea. We have two great longings—food and sleep, and we are happy in the knowledge that both will be fully assuaged.

Fish, rabbit, duck, snipe, hare, geese—we ring the changes on this marvellous fare; our pleasure only increased by knowing ourselves responsible for everything that is placed before us. We can almost tell the very fish, the very bird.

“Hi, Mac, here comes that big one. Remember, the first one you caught.”

"This is the duck you got going away, isn't it, sir? Second barrel?"

The stars come out above us, faintly...faintly ; only the evening star glitters more brightly than the rest. The camp fire casts shadows leaping up and down the monastery walls.

Supper ended, we gather round and the night draws in. It has been a day granted by the gods, a leaf from the wonderful Book of Summer. We think over all we have done, all we hope to do on the morrow, but sleep claims us, and soon the only sound is a restless gull crying to his mate.

Is the next day the Sabbath ? If so, we are up betimes. Away over on the hill side there stands a little church; we can just discern its spire peeping from the surrounding trees. A number of houses huddle round it, the whole forming one of the tiny Loch-side villages.

A detachment of the Troop are to attend church parade. Clean uniforms are donned; the Herr holds a dress inspection, and off we go. First over to the mainland, and then we walk for three miles along a field-path, past waving corn and fields of potatoes and turnips.

The church bells are ringing as we climb the slope to the village. Straightening our neckerchiefs

we fall into line, and with our Scoutmaster at our head, our footsteps echo along the rough country road.

We enter the old church and file into three vacant pews. The bell rings merrily above our heads ; the sunlight, striking through the trees, streams in at the open windows and dapples the walls with dancing shadows.

There is a hush; the minister enters the pulpit and gives us a welcoming smile. The scents and sounds of summer float into the quiet, quaint old church, and looking round I see the quiet, quaint old villagers who summer and winter, sunshine and shower, live out their lives by the Loch-side and the hill-side, on the land they love and know so well.

The minister rises and looks round at the familiar faces, glances over the rows of the bright, fresh lads. He bows his head in prayer.

We do not return to Our Island for lunch, but bivouac by the Loch-side, sitting among the trees.

Then the Herr takes us exploring and no one can make a walk more interesting than he. Every bird and animal, every tree and flower is known to him. He has all the 'ologies' at his finger-tips. He sets us sudden tests; knot-tying, estimating the height of trees, direction-finding and map-reading. We run races and come upon nests innumerable; we catch glimpses of many rarely seen incidents in the life of the wilds.

Tea is taken by a burn side. The billy boils, the toast crisps; sardines and eggs, biscuits and chocolates are handed round. "Feed the brute" is a motto that must be prominent in any camp and we certainly do not overlook it.

During our second annual camp on Our Island the monastery again fell from grace. From now on it was used as a stores hut, and as a dormitory for the youngsters, although the Herr—who required a hammock larger than most folks—still remained faithful to his first love.

The seniors now camped out in tents. We had been doubtful if they would stand the gales that swept over the Loch on occasion; the ground was so spongy that pegs could not obtain a firm hold. However, we decided to risk it, and we weathered the gales, although many times it was touch and go whether or not the tent, and ourselves inside them, would go billowing into the water !

The sight of the tents gave to the camp the one thing that had been missing in its appearance *as a camp*. It was good to look down upon Our Island from the hilltops, or approach it by water, and see the white tents gleaming.

Year by year we made alterations and improvements. The appeal of the island never lessened; indeed, we awaited our spell upon it in a fever of impatience.

Long before the summer camp was due my brother and myself would slip away some fine Sunday morning and row to Our Island. There we would bask all day, the world forgetting, only too happy to be back once more among the treasured surroundings.

As one grows older it so often happens that places loved as a child, places held dear in memory, prove disappointing upon a return visit. But, 'they change their skies above them and not their hearts who roam', and to us, Our Island is to-day as it ever has been. Only it is haunted with fragrant memories.....

"Still scented like the pages of a book
With petals of the bygone years."

Our camping years are over; we are scattered to the four quarters of the earth. The Herr has 'gone Home'; the Laird has gone. There would be many vacant places down our long table were we who remain to gather together again.

My last year comes. I do not know it is to be such, but the sands are running out for me. I am soon to leave the village behind and adventure along ways less peaceful and easy.

The summer is one from nature's infinite variety. Brave, sunlit days follow one another as if they will never end, then suddenly the skies cloud over, the hills are lost in mist and the rain beats down upon the canvas.

We are old stagers: old contemptibles. The vagaries of the weather have no dread for us. We take sunshine and shower as they come and are equally happy.

Indeed, looking back on camps in hundreds of places at all times of the year from March to October, I can think of none happier than those when it rained, or even snowed. There is something engendered in youth by the open air that makes it impervious to hardship. Even more—a something wells up that causes the hardship to be not recognised as such, but only as an added incentive, an added part of the fun of the whole thing.

There is a saying that 'he who knows only how to enjoy and not to endure, is ill-fitted to go down the stream of life through such a world as this.' We tried to go one better; it was our endeavour to make our endurance of our hardships *enjoyable*, and I do not think we essayed the feat in vain.

Was it rain or bad cooking, or any of the other so-called 'disadvantages' of camping out, we found that they became the butt of the humour of the whole camp.

So when the rain comes we are ready for it. "Out you go, Jock; and loosen the guy-ropes", and Jock scuttles under the doorway, cussing at every rope that it is not *his* turn to turn out and get wet.

"Where is 'The Happy Family'?", someone shouts, and before long we are engrossed over 'Mr. Potts, the Painter', and 'Miss Bone, the Butcher's Daughter.'

Over by the doorway the S. M. writes up his diary, Bobby indites a letter to his girl, while 'Steam-bile' exercises his cheeks, an amusement of which he never tires.

Jock falls asleep and snores loudly until 'put a sock in it' is literally carried out.

Then off we go for a run along the beach. What does the rain matter? Clothes soon dry. Back we come, warm as toast; a quick change, and steaming hot tea is handed round, great 'door-steps' of bread and jam that many can scarcely 'stride'. Scones and pancakes follow, biscuits, and - if the occasion be auspicious - the Herr produces a cherry cake sent over to us by the Laird and his wife.

The rain changes to a drizzle. The Herr looks anxiously and eagerly at the Loch. He judges the wind, the temperature.

"What about fishing? Who's coming?", and three or four of those mysterious beings, anglers, disappear into the mirk.

"Angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so"; certainly there were no stars in the firmament forecasting a piscatorial future for those of us who remain. Perch fishing is a delight, both to mind and to body; but to stand flogging the water for hours on end, the rain trickling under the collar of one's mackintosh and down one's neck, and then, perhaps to catch one trout...this is hardihood to which I can never aspire.

When the night comes it is good to lie and listen to the rain on the canvas. It is a soft soothing sound and one that soon brings sleep in its train.

The camp is nearly over; on the morrow we must strike our tents and move on. Leave Our Island to the seagulls and to the terns, to the autumn mists and the equinoctial gales. Summer is going and we with it.

We have done all the wonderful things we have done so often before, rowed over for the milk and butter, and said 'Good-bye' to our kind friends on the farm. We have bathed, and chased the rabbits until their white scuts were seen flying in every direction.

And now we are gathered about the camp fire. It is dark around us; we can see the gleam of stars in the still water. Lights shine from among the trees on the hill sides: there is the tiny village huddling round the church, the cottars sitting by their peat fires, the minister writing his sermon for the approaching Sabbath.

Logs are thrown upon the fire, sparks hiss upwards and fall in showers, the flames lick round the dry wood, leaping and dancing. We sit with blankets worn in Indian fashion about us, logs or stones forming our seat. Every eye is on the fire, watching the flames with their strange fascination. The monastery is lit up with a ruddy glow. The tents show white and ghostly.

Someone starts a camping song; his voice rings out clear and true. With a shout we yell the chorus

Startled seagulls protest in anguished cries, but we heed them not. Chorus after Chorus goes rolling over the Loch into the night. With some we hesitate; one verse, and then we stumble. But with others from beginning to end we sing them, and sing them over and over again.

“One man went to mow,
Went to mow a meadow.....”

or,

“Wrap me up in my tarpaulin jacket
And say, ‘A poor sailor lies low, lies low...!’”

“Once aboard the lugger...”, and the evergreen
“John Brown’s Body” go echoing to the hills.

We talk of old days, and the youngsters listen with awe. Pre-war days, and camps that are held very precious in our memory. War days with their glamour and sorrow; our waste paper and bottle collecting, our V. A. D. and Police Orderly duties. We speak of those who have passed over, Scouts who have blazed the trail. Earlier Island Camps, concerts we have staged with all their joys and miseries; the Jamboree and all its wonders. We pass in review the marvellous youth that has been ours, and the Herr listens, a boy at heart himself and one who has joined in our every endeavour.

We speak of our great Movement and of our Chief. Some of us have sat round just such a camp fire with him, and we prize the memory.

The fire sinks low but no one rises to tend it. We all sit silent, each occupied with his own thoughts. Some of the youngsters are sleeping quietly in their heavy blankets. The flickering light shows up their faces, young lads tired with the excitement of the day.

The stars are bright now. The air is clear and crisp. The night is still and silent.

With a low 'Goodnight' to the Herr, we seek our tents. As we stand by the open doorway before snuffing the candles our hearts are full. We feel we have made a promise with life to do our best. We are returning to the daily task, the common round, but returning with a fresh and a clean outlook, bodies and minds renewed. In our hearts there is but one prayer.

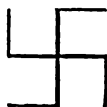
"Give us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed."

As we turn away the stillness is broken by a lonely, querulous cry. Far off another answers. It is repeated again, coming ever nearer.

There is a rush of wings overhead. A lone, restless seagull beats over the tent and away on into the darkness towards the hills.

Its cry comes to us growing fainter and yet more faint.....the Cry of Our Island.

The Camp lies silent beneath the stars.....



GEORGE HENRY

PRINTED AT THE
COSRI SCOUT PRINTING SERVICE,
Palace Road, COCHIN.

ERRATA.

PAGE.	LINE.	FOR.	PLEASE READ.
18	19	our	our.
19	6	d smantlings.	dismantlings
23	26	young	young
38	8	when	when
50	23	tha	the
„	27	breek!’’s.	brecks!’’
65	3	ter	the
71	8	scracely	scarcely.
99	21	decams	dreams.
